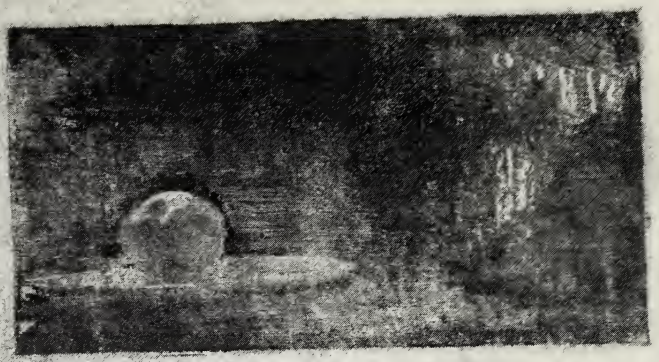

THE WATERMARK

A Journal of the Arts • University of Massachusetts • Boston

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THE WATERMARK

A Journal of the Arts • University of Massachusetts • Boston

VOLUME 4 • 1996-1997

THE WATERMARK

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EDITORS' NOTE

We would like to thank everyone who contributed in the production of this year's edition of *The Watermark,* as well as to show our appreciation to those responsible for the journal's success in the past. The Watermark is a student-run and funded organization and exists to showcase both the art and writing of UMass Boston students. *The Watermark* is published once a year and is distributed free of charge to the entire UMass Boston Community.

The selections included in the present volume were chosen by an editorial staff made-up entirely of UMass Boston students. They represent what this staff considered to be the best work among the total submitted to *The Watermark* over the course of the year. The selection process was long and difficult and the editorial staff struggled with many of the decisions that had to be made along the way. However, these decisions were necessary to produce what we think is another first-rate edition of *The Watermark.* Those students whose submissions were not accepted for publication this year are encouraged to submit again next year or to seek other homes for their work. The selections made are representative of the standards and dispositions of the current editorial staff. Anyone with suggestions or criticisms from which future editions of *The Watermark* might benefit are urged to drop us a line or—better still—join next year's staff and put your own two cents in.

We did not produce this journal in a vacuum: we are indebted to many people for their support. First, to our indefatigable advisor, Donna Neal; we would also like to acknowledge the support of the Art and English Departments, Creative Writing, the Mass Media, the Student Senate, Wit's End, and the Harbor Art Gallery.

Finally, we have a few fond, yet sad farewells to make. We send best wishes to Minnesota, where Lori Byrne and Norm Oppegard have moved. They have been both valued staff members and contributors. Second, we say good luck and thank you to Professor Patricia Powell, who is taking a leave of absence to pursue an opportunity at another university. Her feedback and guidance have been vitally important to many of UMass Boston's fiction writers. Third, we express our deep gratitude and wishes for continued success to Professor Martha Collins. After many years at UMass Boston, Professor Collins is also taking a leave of absence to pursue an irresistible professional opportunity. Professor Collins founded the Creative Writing Program at UMB in 1979; we express our sincerest thanks for the immeasurable support and encouragement she has given to our university's poets.

Join *The Watermark* Staff

A journal like *The Watermark* is not an easy undertaking but there are many rewards. Working on *The Watermark* staff provides students with a chance to become involved in the planning and production of a major publication. Before the end of the semester we will hold meetings for next year's staff. We invite students from all areas to join our staff. Call (617) 287-7960 or stop by our office located on the fifth floor of McCormack Hall, room 407.

Submit Your Work

Any UMass Boston student is encouraged to submit work for the upcoming edition of *The Watermark*. General guidelines follow:

We ask for blind submissions. That is, only your student ID number should appear on the work. All other information about yourself should be on a separate cover sheet and include your name, student ID number, address, phone number, title of your work and its medium.

Written work should be typed and not exceed 4,500 words. Fiction and non-fiction should be double-spaced and submitted in duplicate. Poems should be typed as you wish them to appear and submitted in triplicate. We seek all types of written work including essays, commentaries, short stories, poems, plays, humor, etc. We ask that you limit the total number of submissions to no more than five pieces.

Artwork includes prints, line drawings, collages, paintings, computer art, photography, etc. Please bear in mind that these need to be reproduced (and often reduced). Again please limit your total submissions to no more than five.

We are willing to work with you if you encounter any problems with these guidelines. Please call us at 287-7960.

KATE YOUNG CALEY

This Greenhouse of Yours

for Martha Collins

Snow covers what we need
to survive. I don't just mean
the particular scent of rose or
thyme. I mean we need a place

where it's not all rain and freezing
rain, and white snow upon snow,
and gray snow kicked from boots
or piled by the drive, defiant as rock.

Where warm air is moist, easy on lungs,
and the strength of sun is encouraged
by the leaning of certain angles,
an absence of draft at the doorway.

There, the sturdy plants we grow
grow sturdier yet. And cuttings
just started take root in jelly glasses
lining the dusted shelves.

Roots sprout white,
floating in water like the beginnings
of fine fingers in utero.
They are waiting—longing even

for this is the nature of the root—
to seek good soil, and the soil
in this greenhouse of yours,
it's very good.

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MICHELLE BERRONG

Metastasis

Will it turn
and sink hollow fangs
in a terminal bite
into her patient tissue
and suck, suck?

Will it erupt
from its stasis
in lungs that have heaved healthy
through cold Atlantic waves,
and blow away
the pleural boundary?

Will it splatter
opaque specks of white
on the next CAT scan
where healthy tissues have always
shown dark and translucent?

They play a tense game,
my mother and her cancer,
and she's on a long winning streak.
While tumors wait
she dances and writes grant
proposals, dares to turn fifty.

EDITH DUSHMAN

A Forever Place

I know of a place
Mrs. Sugarman's place
Where I went after school
When no one was home
At my place—We'd have
In mid-day, our Nescafé
Just the two of us
To chat back and forth
Until family members
Would claim her
One by one.

ANNIE GAUGER

Confessions Of A Part-Time Lesbian Housewife

For Erma Bombeck

What's wrong with me? Recently, I woke up and discovered my Madonna CDs make good frisbees. Something's wrong; I don't want flashy clothes, something schlumpy is fine so long as I can have a CD with Ethel Merman singing Cole Porter. How did this happen, I ask myself. I'm five years away from 40, and I feel like I'm making that final victory lap towards middle age at an astonishing speed. It's spring sickness, I tell myself, putting on my *Carmina Burana* CD for the tenth time. I worry. My wife out in the living room is slumped in her chair, watching the T.V. show *Homicide*. Each time I peek out there and see her fingers drumming on the arm chair, I can't help but think the show might be inspiring her. You see, I've been playing Gustav Mahler's *1st, 4th,* and *9th Symphonies* all day long. I have my reasons, of course. If the play I'm revising were a movie, Mahler would have to be part of the soundtrack, and all the dancers in my play would dance flawlessly, and never be injured. The wife knows my playing the same damn CD for weeks has everything to do with revision, so she puts up with it.

I'm a culture hog, a whore of books. If there's a poetry reading I'll go, especially if the poet makes no sense at all. My wife hates this—she likes plot. Stories are good, and that's that. I learned six years ago never to take my wife to a poetry reading—especially if the poet obviously grew up with a trust fund and whines in iambic pentameter. When my wife is not loving something, which is often when it comes to the higher arts, she slowly turns in my direction with a face that looks like she's changing a full diaper. I dread this. I call it the "pesky devil" face after a picture book we keep around our hovel. Our young guests howl when they see this book because there's a monster within it that bears a striking resemblance to my wife, and that very monster provokes all kinds of trouble. When I see this expression on the face of the Missus, I know I am in trouble.

In my youth I was teased mercilessly by my parents for insisting we all get culture and refinement by going to the ballet or the theater constantly, especially if I had anything to do with the show. My

folks pretty much indulged me, though they lacked the prim etiquette of cultured theater goers. Horror of horrors, my mother sometimes came to the theater in her hand-made work clothes, with a pliers still in her pocket. She always balanced her check book in the theater as she waited for the curtain to rise, and this usually was after she took off her shoes because her feet were swollen from standing all day at work. Nonetheless, she was always present, even through the atrocious modern dance performances where we ran around to amplified growing cactus sounds. "Interesting," my Mama would say, trying to be supportive, "not my favorite of your work, but maybe you'll do something musical next time?"

I married a woman like my mother; she wants everything spelled out, so it's easier at the end of a day spent answering the phones at the hospital. She wants to laugh and sing along. In short, she wants to love the theater, because I do, and she knows it's important to me. Despite her good intentions, my wife showed her true nature when we went to the opera on a recent Friday night.

I had started the day stopping at Tower Records, because after I threw my Madonna CDs out the 3rd floor window I was just dying to hear some medieval madrigals. Tower is a tower, with the main floor full of all the cute stuff I used to love. The sales help were all so beautiful, though they were huffy. I couldn't tell if they were disappointed in life—stuck working at Tower instead of starring in music videos; or if all those piercings made it somehow painful to speak or grunt me in the direction of the classical department. Maybe it was that Alanis Morrisette album blaring through the first couple of floors—I confess, I bought this album, but my god, was that the only record recorded in 1995? Played and played to death on every radio station all day long, all year until I now scream every time I hear any cut from it? I lurched toward the escalator in agony. I held tight to the railing, as I watched all I had known about my previous kind of music go bye bye. I ascended three flights into a world of the unknown: the classical department where the men have on plaid shirts that look okay when buttoned askewed. They all have plastic pocket protectors with pens and slide rulers, and they're so glad to help me, they line up. They are "record guys" who lament over the loss of vinyl. Strangely enough, the friendly men at Tower Records not only all *look* like my dad, they *seem* like my dad. They work there because they're pushers who try to maintain a habit with dignity; they're there to turn me on to *Die Fledermaus* and *Boris Goodenoff*. If the store was theirs, I swear they'd send me home with buckets of free CDs. They know they've caught a live one—a sucker who can be converted—weaned from new-wave music, if properly mentored. Tuba

music! "You want tuba music?" They say, miraculously producing the latest tuba-music solo CD. I am impressed. I buy them all.

In my head Tower Records translates to Las Vegas, which translates to "Lost Wages." There I was like a drunk on a cultural expedition. I've since developed some guidelines to keep from spending the rent on music. Rule number one: never try to leave the record store with more CDs than you can carry. Rule number two: the budget department is like a candy store. Eight CDs later, I called the wife from the office to confess my transgression from our budget. You see, her steady chant has been one of "I wanna house with a barn so I can work on the car whenever I want, then I need lots of pets: Maybe some fuzzy llamas and goats for the back yard, and a pony . . . I have always wanted a pony." We have been saving to leave our 3rd-floor hovel, a walk-up with walls frosted over in plaster to hide the dings of a century of terrorist-like tenants. My wife forgave me when she realized my impulsive need was fulfilled for less than $25. Forgiven and hating myself as I imagined living forever in squalor, a new need arose: I had to go to the opera that night and it was going to cost us big time.

After work I met the little woman for drinks and promised her deferred oral gratification if she would please indulge me once more. We shared a margarita. Opera and the ballet together? The salt and lemon puckered her face. She'd rather pay the money to see the chanting Monks because she'd get cultured and would save at the same time. A margarita the size of a bird bath later, she was so chummy she told me to choose.

Orpheo and Euridice it was going to be. Opera, orchestra, the Mark Morris Dance Group. I was gleeful sliding another 50 dollars of our house down payment through the box office window before the curtain. Tickets in hand and waiting in line, a pack of men in elegant evening attire cut in front of us like 4x4s in rush hour traffic—haughty and precious looking—with snooty dames or equally snooty fellahs in tow. My wife in her baseball cap and corduroy farm coat started to bristle. Nothing pisses her off more than the wealthy who forget to display *noblesse oblige*.

"Oh, I have a feeling I'm not going to like this," she began to whine. "Do we have to? I'm hungry."

"Come on, dear," I coaxed, "I'll race you to the top of the Wang Center."

"I think we've made a big mistake," I heard her say from behind me. "You know, you're a real con, I wanna go hear the chanting monks."

I was embarrassed, so I scarcely looked back as I began to climb all those stairs—I didn't spend ten years in dancing school for nothing and

I'd be damned if I'd huff and puff, or linger long enough to catch an ear full of my buttercup's displeasure, though I knew full well my night at the opera was on its way straight to hell. Then I glanced back at her—frowning, tired, with a button missing from her coat, and the frayed threads sticking out with an obvious will of their own. I could have kicked myself—the least I could do is keep the buttons sewn on her coat—I mean fair's fair—she changes the motor oil in the car. But, oh well, it would have been too tacky to whip out a needle and thread then and there. With each echelon of stairs we ascended we passed by a sea of merry, civil, and good smelling theater patrons, none of whom looked like they had just answered a hundred phone calls at the hospital between trips to the copy machine. But I dashed by.

"Just where are we going?" she wheezed.

"Top balcony, row E," I said.

And there we were, below the great blue oval in the ceiling, at the foot of the final summit of the Wang. We turned back and looked down. The theater was a mountain of seats we had climbed. The orchestra was a mile away and blurred.

"E as in East of Jesus," scowled the little woman. "All this money spent and we need binoculars."

The lights dimmed as we rustled out of our coats—now sweaty from our climb and change in altitude. We plopped into our tiny, velvetless chairs.

"Oh, I can tell I'm just going to hate this," she said. "Fifty bucks. Fifty bucks!"

The curtain went up, and the dancers danced a sort of hulky dance, while Orpheo sang in a falsetto voice.

"What the hell is that he's carrying?"

"It's his harp, dear," I said.

"Well this is just bad, I tell you, just bad indeed," she said with her voice rising. "Why, I've seen better dance recitals given by teenagers in the Natick Mall."

I was suddenly the lady who brought the baby in the movie theater. The people around us turned and glared at me. And the thing was, the dancers weren't bad, they were modern. Ballet is a static dance form based on sucking it in and pulling up, whereas the best modern dance, as of late, is all about sustained momentum. Take a bucket of water and heave it in an arch and watch how the force of motion pushes the water into an arch—the body is a container of liquid made to move like this. It takes years of training to find the center in the momentum. These dancers had mastered it. I spent a year with a kinesiologist who trained dancers to isolate the ilio psoas—tiny strings of muscle deep in the gut of guts. To know and work these muscles transforms the dancer. To find it took more than sucking in; it

was more subtle—like plucking the harp. At the right moment, the pluck aligns the skeleton and catapults the dancer skyward, more bounce per ounce. In my youth I found it and stayed air-born for almost two years. Pluck the harp, spank the sky, pluck the harp, splash the air.

The only problem is you have to land again. The velocity of body weight adds up to about 1000 pounds when landing. This slams bones as delicate as pencils together, and wears away cartilage. Do the math. I was finished before the age of twenty.

"Fifty bucks . . .," said the wife as Mark Morris' dancers flounced around. It is rare that I can stand to look at live performances of dance. I was supposed to perform, at least for a little while. I trained with some of the best back when the word aids meant "to help." But the tiny bones in my feet fractured. Then the cartilage in my knees wore too thin. Then the Reagan administration collapsed 70 percent of the arts funding for the dance company I was studying with in Seattle. They folded like a house of cards, stranding myself and a slew of up and coming dancers. Remember, Reagan's military build up was far more important than anything the arts could contribute to the fabric of American culture. The University of Washington cut its dance curriculum. Everyone in my world fled to New York, where I knew I would have a decade in waitressing ahead of me. What I valued—what I was—was being erased. It snapped my spirit, and I simply walked away. I defected. I divorced dance, theater and ten years of my youth completely. Fifteen years later it truly was painful for me to be sitting there watching and it took all my effort to keep a straight face because my whole being remembers what it is to dance like that.

The wife was snickering. The dancer's moves were kind of stupid at that point, but I understood what the choreographer was getting at. Like bad poetry, funky choreography is part of the process, and completely forgivable. She took out her Chapstick and circled it around her lips, and snapped the cap back on.

"Fifty bucks," she said.

"Oh shut up, will you," I snapped, "live with it."

Her fingers drummed the arm of her seat. "Do you think they'd give us our money back if we left now?" she said.

"I'm not leaving."

"Well this is stupid, why's the lead got a squeaky voice? What's wrong with his legs?"

"It's a falsetto voice. He limps because he's heartbroken."

"What happened to his ass, did Euridice kick it off him?"

It was hard for me not to laugh, because her observation seemed true—Orpheo-No-Butt was gimping about the stage, and not only

that, no one had bothered to iron his toga. "You just hush up now, I mean it!" I said.

Just then an usher came down to see if we needed anything which was a polite way to tell us to shut up. We, after all, were not the only people to spend fifty bucks to plunk our abundant butts in the tiniest chairs in the house. I watched the usher descend as Orpheo descended to Hades. Then I saw that face. The face of the monster in our book. Turning, turning towards me, staring at me. Making my ears burn, and practically piercing them afresh. Goading me to laugh at the obvious bizarre limp as Orpheo-No-Butt careened into a fake fountain and dented his harp.

"For fifty bucks you'd think they could do better than a cardboard harp," she said. Then she leaned over all boozy breathed, stuck out her hand and said, "Give me the ATM card, that's it, I've had it." I handed over my wallet: "Take the whole damn thing. Go. Anywhere. Please. Just go."

"I'm going to see if they'll give me my money back. Then I'll be in the sports bar across the street." With that she fled. I watched her as she scurried through the darkness, her gait again cheerful. *Good riddance at last,* I sighed; it was me and the opera alone.

The dancers flung themselves about in splashes of color. The curtain closed, and the patrons rushed to the lobby cutting each other off again. I read the biographies of all the dancers I might have been. But I wasn't a dancer, nor would I ever be one again. That was it, and that was final. Instead, I was married to a woman who gladly sacrificed so I could write about dancers. In fact, she made damn sure everything I wrote was recorded each time it was performed. Thinking of this, I began to miss her.

Writing was one thing, but did that wife of mine know how deep was the deep-assed hole the absence of dancing had left? That that abyss had to become what I spun my stories from? I had been on the brink of being in the big leagues of the dance world—we were watching the big leagues. Could I ever explain, or make her understand what it was like to move like that? Did she have any idea what it was like to sit in the theater divorced from an apparition of my self I now saw dancing—an apparition who managed to survive, for whatever luck or reason, while I sat there like a lump, hard pressed not to laugh because she was making fun of high art? Oh, I was driving myself crazy for all that stinking-stinking thinking spinning around like a perpetual pirouette. I sighed. It was a long time ago. I didn't want to dance anymore. But big disappointments in life can cast a shadow on the psyche like a bad habit for years.

On the second intermission I descended the stairs to gaze at the gold leaf, and paintings, and people in black ties. I descended to escape

my thoughts of long ago. The music, the splendor of it all, threw me into such a reverie I soon ran up all those steps again and was shocked when I reached the top. The wife was back and she had that face of the monster. Her fingers drummed my seat, coaxing me to sit down. I both loved and dreaded her. I sat down. The lights dimmed. Silence. She burped quietly. She wreaked of fried onions. I glared at her.

"I had a burger with fries and a malt. I'm happy now. By the way are we in the final quarter?"

"Act, Honey, The opera is divided into acts . . . $25 bucks a ticket you go stuff yourself for the second act."

She smiled and nestled her compact self tightly in her chair. "Full," she said resting her hands on her pudge.

I poked her side with two fingers. How dare she. "This is the last act," I said, "can you behave?"

She nodded.

"Jesus! burgers!" I was quiet. At least she was honest. The curtain came up, and I was glad she was there. I was ready to go home, and home, though it was a hovel on the third floor, was where she was.

"Did you bring me fries?" I asked.

She showed me the tin foil package. She made that face. She put her arm around me and loosened her shoes. I looked back at the stage.

"I knew every edge of my body like that dancer once," I whispered.

"I know," she said, reaching her hand up my sleeve so she could rub my back, "I know."

JULIET GLAUBER

Texas June

Niki. Niki. OhmyprettyNiki.
We walked through the greenbelt
with our picnic food from Kirby Lane,
and walked down the path of least resistance that almost killed me.

You stood patiently a few feet beneath me,
having hopped
effortlessly off the rocks
I slid down on my butt.
We ate lunch in our glam 40's style bathing suits
smiling conspiratorily.

You dove off the ledge into the creek.
I stood above you, on the bank, gulping.
"Dive on in, Ju-ju!"
I chickened out and jumped in,
diving was more then I was capable of.

You were the beautiful waterbaby,
and I paddled after you,
trying not to invade your space.
But you hugged me in
and we swam with your dogs,
sat in the waterfalls,
and pretended we were rich
and European in our oh-so-snooty spa.

We swam like seals—rolling, and spinning
and kissing under the water.

HIROMI ARIMA
untitled

HIROMI ARIMA
untitled

HIROMI ARIMA
untitled

MARC D. GOLDFINGER

Two Dogs And A Kitten

The first thing that I noticed after hugging the kids and wiping the tears away was the mound of plastic garbage bags in the middle of the living room and the smell.

The two big dogs circled around the garbage pile. I saw my daughter creeping under a coffee table. The dust swirled around her small body and she pulled a little red kitten, mewing as it pawed at her arm, out from under the table. She ran over to me with a big smile on her face and I lifted her up. Out of the corner of my eye I saw my son watching us. There was a haunted expression on his face. There were more than ghosts living here.

I took her and the kids out to dinner. The kids had a great time. Jasmine kept jumping in and out of my lap. Isaac sat quietly and ate his food. Cress asked me about prison. I didn't have much to say about it. She kept tossing down beers and shots. Then she got sloppy and started hanging all over me. I remember how bad things were when the shit started and I had to go on the run. I felt like drinking. I didn't want to because then I didn't know what would happen next.

Jasmine and Isaac ate ice cream. Cress was coming on to me hard. I was horny. It had been a long time. When I was in California I had been sleeping with this junkette that I had been shooting dope with. Another lifetime ago. I knew that there was no love between me and Cress but decided to sleep with her anyway.

Went back to the apartment with her and the kids. It was a first floor apartment in a two family house. The electric and the heat had been shut off for no payment. The water was still running. It was pretty cold still. Early May in New Hampshire.

I asked her how long the heat had been off. She said, "Two months." I thought about the cold. I thought about the kids. I looked at the pile of garbage in the living room. The dogs were running around the living room and Jasmine was sitting with the little red kitten on her lap. I walked into their bedroom to check it out and stepped in dog

shit. There was more than one pile in the room. Some of the piles had small footprints in them. I wanted to cry but prison had made me forget how. I wanted to kill someone. That was probably easier to do than cry.

I cleaned their bedroom. Isaac's sheets were stained with urine and smelled. Between shit and piss, and salt wanting to kick out of my eyes, I cleaned. When I asked Cress where the clean sheets were she said there weren't any. I asked her if the sheets on her bed were clean. She said they hadn't been changed in a little while.

I walked around the pile of garbage in the living room, through the kitchen, down a hallway cluttered with debris and into her bedroom. Pulled the sheet off her bed and made one of the beds in the kids' room. I told them that it was all right to sleep together tonight and that I would take them to the laundry tomorrow and out to eat again. They went to bed.

I took Cress to bed.

We fell asleep afterwards. I woke up in the middle of the night and went out to the living room to sleep. We never slept together again.

The next morning the kids came out. The only food in the house was peanut butter and bread. Cress came out of the bedroom and told Jasmine to make them sandwiches for breakfast. I asked Cress why she didn't do it.

"Jasmine always does it. They can take care of themselves."

I told the kids that they were going out for breakfast. I looked for their clothes. There were no clean clothes. I washed the dog shit off of Isaac's foot and got them dressed in what was available. I didn't bother with the clothes for the old lady. I figured that she could take care of herself.

"Let's go out for breakfast," I said.

Jasmine put down the kitten and smiled at me. Isaac took me by the hand and started chattering as we left the house. I looked back and saw Cress standing on the porch as we walked down the blacktop toward the center of town. She was smoking a cigarette and watching us.

Jasmine and I took turns pulling the wagon that I had found under the

porch. She was pretty strong for a seven year old. The laundry bags bounced around whenever the wagon hit a bump. Isaac was talking about another kid that he sometimes played with. I wondered where I could get them bathed in some warm water.

Jasmine wanted to help me put the dirty clothes in the washing machine. Isaac wanted to play with one of the kids at the laundromat. I let them.

We went to the little town restaurant to eat. I knew one of the waitresses from before I went on the run and then prison. She asked me how I was doing and if I was going to go back into business. I told her that I didn't think so.

"Oh. That's too bad. There hasn't been a reliable dealer here since you've been gone."

I thought about what she said for a minute but it didn't seem like a good idea. It had been fun and a good way to make money but prison was one long day at a time. I remembered looking out my cell window in maxi-tier when I first got there. The leaves were just starting to tinge with colour in the late August air of New England and I knew that I would be looking out at the leaves changing next year from the same building. My stomach felt funny with the memory and I pulled myself back to the table.

"I'm all done with the business."

She smiled and nodded as I told her what we wanted to eat.

After breakfast we put the clothes in the dryer and walked around town. I met some other people I knew and chatted with them while Jasmine and Isaac played with a couple of other kids. They asked me if I was going to go back into business.

"No," was what I said.

They asked me if I wanted to smoke a joint. I told them that I didn't get high anymore.

"Oh," was what they said. And they smoked the joint while we talked.

We went back to the laundry and pulled the clothes from the dryer. I taught Jasmine how to fold the clothes. She really got into it. Isaac wanted to help. Jasmine said, "Let me teach him."

Isaac seemed to like that idea and that's the way it went. Jasmine treated Isaac as if she were his mother. Thinking about Cress, I decided that it was no surprise that things were like that.

On the way home I bought cleaning supplies and stuffed them in the wagon.

I started with their bedroom first. I pulled the dog-crap-encrusted rug out of the room and put it out by the garbage bin. I stripped their beds completely and dragged the mattresses outside to air in the sun.

Cress was visiting with a male friend. I asked them if they would help clean.

"Buy us some beer and we will," she said.

"This is your place, not mine," I said.

"Yeah," she said, and her male friend grinned.

I bought them the beer and they cleaned one room. Then they disappeared into the bedroom.

I tied the dogs outside. Jasmine played with the kitten on the front lawn.

I came back into the apartment and lifted one of the garbage bags off of the living room floor. There were white maggots squirming on the floor under the bag. My throat felt funny and I carried the bag outside to the bin.

There were maggots all over the place under the bags. I counted the bags as I carried them out. Seventeen in all. I sprinkled soap powder on the maggots and mopped them up. I could hear Cress and her friend in the bedroom as I worked. Jasmine came in and asked where mommy was. I told her that I would take them out for lunch and ice cream as soon as I was done mopping the floor and that mommy was busy right now. She had the kitten in her hands. The dog was barking. I mopped the floor. The bed was creaking in the bedroom.

If the electric was working, I would have played the radio.

The dirty dishes spilled out of the sink onto the drainboard. Small bugs crept on the dishes. I figured they could wait until after lunch and ice cream. Jasmine was playing in the front yard and Isaac was sitting on the couch picking his nose and thumbing through a coloring book.

"Are you guys ready to go?" I asked.

They nodded and then Cress and her friend came out of the bedroom.

"Are you going to invite their mother?" she asked.

"No," I said.

"See how he is," she said to her friend. "Prison didn't change him."

They laughed and clicked their beers together. I was glad I didn't have a gun.

"Let's go," I said to the kids.

"What about mommy?" Isaac asked.

"She's not coming," I said.

"I don't want to go either," said Isaac.

"Come on with us," said Jasmine.

I waited for him to decide. He grabbed his sister's hand, glared at me for a second, and looked back at his mother.

"Go with daddy," she said.

We went out for lunch and ice cream. I took them to the lake to play and we ran around and went nuts together. It was the best day I had had in four years.

When we got back to the house there were some other people over there. They were all smoking dope and drinking beer and Jack Daniels. The kids' mattresses were still out on the lawn.

I dragged them in and made the beds. The dogs were back in the house. One of them had shit in the bedroom. I cleaned it up and tied them back outside. I told Cress that I didn't want them in the house anymore unless she trained them not to shit on the floor.

"It's my house and I'll do what I like," she said.

"Do you like your children walking through dog shit?" I asked.

The room got quiet for a minute. Nobody looked at anybody else. Even the dope and alcohol didn't cut through that silence.

"I'll let you keep them outside for now," she said.

I put new sheets on the beds and then started washing the dishes. Cress and her friends went out to drink on the porch. Isaac and Jasmine sat and watched the kitten push a dust ball around the room. There was something wrong with the plumbing and I couldn't get the water to run fast, so I carried all the dishes to the bath tub. The bath tub had dog shit in it.

I cleaned the tub and washed the dishes. Swept and mopped the floors. Cress and her friends came in and she made a joke about the new maid. I didn't say anything but if thoughts could kill I would have been a serial killer.

I took the kids out for supper because there still was nothing to eat in the house. I thought I would shop for some basics in the morning. No refrigerator. That would put some limits on my shopping. At least the dishes were all clean.

After supper I took the kids to play at an apartment building where they knew a bunch of other kids. I got to talk to one of the moms and found that her ex-boyfriend bought reefer off of me before the big bust. She hadn't seen him in over three years. Two of her three kids were his. He didn't even know about one of them because he had gone before she knew she was pregnant.

Her name was Lisa.

"Can I bathe my kids at your place?" I asked. "No hot water at mine."

"No hot water at my place either," she said. "But the electric is on. If

you want, we could heat a pot of water and fill the tub with that."

When the options are limited, you learn to live within the limits. Sometimes.

"Okay," I said.

We went inside with the kids, mine and hers, and she put a pot of water on the stove. It was a giant pot and would take a while to heat. She popped open a beer and asked if I would like one. I kind of wanted one but remembered what things were like once I started up. I never knew where things would end.

"No, but thanks."

"Want to smoke a joint with me?" she asked.

I really thought about that one for a minute. One joint. How could that hurt? It had been so long. I struggled to remember why I didn't want to smoke and things were not as clear as they had seemed to be.

I looked around for the kids and they were playing in the living room, all five of them. I took the joint and lit it.

Three joints later, there was steam rising from the water and Lisa and I got all tangled up and there was steam rising from us too. I pulled my pants back up and filled the tub. First I bathed the kids then took a bath myself. I hadn't bathed since I got there. Over two days now. I didn't even know when the kids had last bathed. I brushed out Jasmine's hair with one of Lisa's brushes.

Later Jasmine fell asleep and I carried her home in my arms. Isaac walked quietly beside me holding onto my trousers. Lisa had asked me to come back later but I thought I would just sleep on the couch after I put the kids to bed.

I thought about smoking the joints. Nothing really bad had happened and I didn't start to drink or think about shooting heroin. It had been all right.

As far as making love to Lisa, well, things just fell into place. I guess it had been good for both of us. I just hoped she didn't expect more than I could give.

Cress was drunk and so were her friends. I put the kids to bed and sat up in the dark with them for a while. I was glad that they were sleeping on clean sheets. For a while I was worried that the noise would wake them but I guess they were used to it.

I went out to the porch and sat in one of the soft chairs. Fell asleep. Woke up to a crashing noise in the living room.

I ran in and two of the guys were rolling around on the floor. There was blood and I saw a knife flash in the light. Everybody was yelling and I saw Jasmine standing at the door to the bedroom. Her eyes were open real wide.

I ran over to her and picked her up. One of the guys screamed and I saw the flesh hanging off his cheek. His teeth were showing and the other guy pulled back and stared like he couldn't believe what a knife could do.

I had seen this go on in other places but, with my kids right there, I really got upset and blew up. I told everyone to get out. One of the guys started yelling at me and Jasmine was crying. I guess Isaac was still asleep.

The police came over. They were surprised to see me and asked how long I planned on staying around. I told them that I didn't know. And that was the truth.

They took the guy who was cut up to the hospital and everyone went home. Cress kept drinking. Jasmine curled up with me on the couch and we fell asleep.

I woke up just as the sun was coming up. I eased myself off the couch so Jasmine wouldn't wake up. Went outside and smoked a cigarette, then went to the country store to buy cereal and milk. I bought some ice to keep the milk cold for a while.

When I got back, Jasmine and Isaac were huddled on the couch together. Isaac's pajamas were on the floor. They were wet with urine.

I stripped his bed and opened the window to air it out. I had left the dogs tied outside all night so the floor was clean for the first time since I had arrived.

I sponged Isaac off with cold tap water. He shivered and cried a little bit but he seemed happy to be clean. Jasmine was playing with the kitten as I put the cereal on the table, poured in the milk, and slapped a teaspoonful of sugar into each dish.

The three of us sat down and started to eat. The kitten jumped up on the table and started to eat out of Isaac's bowl. "No," I said, and pushed the kitten off the table.

It jumped back up and crept over to Jasmine's bowl. I pushed it down to the floor again. Jasmine asked me why I pushed it off the table and I told her that it was not healthy to have the cat eat out of our bowls while we ate.

While I was talking, it jumped back up on the table and started eating out of Isaac's bowl again. I was really annoyed and reached to push it away again. As I pushed, the kitten hissed at me. I batted the kitten off the table.

It seemed like slow motion, but it happened too fast to stop. The kitten hit the floor and slid into the metal leg of the cook stove. Its spine must have snapped and all of a sudden it screeched and thrashed all over the floor.

I looked at Jasmine and Isaac. Their eyes were so big that they spilled into their foreheads and cheeks. The kitten was kicking its front legs furiously as it tried to run from the death that was enveloping it, but it became the death that it was running from.

It was over in about thirty seconds but the horror of the moment was eternal in my mind. Like a freeze frame, it kept happening, happening, happening.

Jasmine was bending over the still, small body and tears streamed down her face.

"What happened, daddy? What happened, daddy?" Isaac asked.

"Daddy, daddy, will the kitten be all right?" Jasmine asked. I kneeled down by the kitten and gently picked up its soft body from the floor. I had never felt more hopeless or helpless in my life.

"Jasmine. Isaac. The kitten is dead."

They both started crying. I wanted to tell them that it had gone to God, would rest in Kitty heaven, all that stuff but I knew that nothing I said would make it right.

Then I saw Cress staring at us from the hallway.

"Daddy's a fucking killer," she hissed at the kids. "He should go back to jail. He killed the kitty."

Torn by sorrow for the kitten, torn by compassion for the kids, torn by hatred for their mother, I cradled the kitten in my arms. Jasmine and Isaac stared at me and I knew that they could not, would not understand.

I asked them to help me lay the kitten to rest in the field in back of the house. I told them that they, we could pray for the kitty and my words echoed hollow in the terrible terrain of my mind.

Cress popped open a warm beer and chugged it down. She glared at me and I was not looking forward to what she would say. I found a shovel and walked out to the field with Jasmine and Isaac. Jasmine held the kitten in her arms. The dogs pulled the chains out to full length and snapped back as they tried to follow us into the field.

I dug a hole. Put the kitten in. Got down on my knees and said a prayer. Jasmine got down on her knees. Sniffled back her tears.

"Is the kitten really with God?" she asked.

"The kitty is just dead!" boomed Cress's voice from nearby. She unhooked the dogs and they bounded over and sniffed at the open grave.

"Jesus," I said, "Couldn't you have waited till we buried the kitten?"

"Why," she said, "some animal is just going to dig it up and eat it anyway. You can thank daddy for this."

The kids cried and I felt all my muscles tense up. One of the dogs went to pick up the kitten and I whacked it on the rump with the shovel. It yelped and ran.

"See," Cress said, "see how daddy is! That's why I hate him."

I shoveled the earth over the kitten while the kids watched. Cress

disappeared into the house. I tied two sticks together and stuck them into the ground above the grave. We stood quietly by the grave for a little while. Jasmine kept looking at me and then back to the grave. Isaac was watching a beetle walk across the grave. He poked it with a stick and I walked back to the house.

Cress went out for a short time and brought back a bottle of Jack Daniels. I cleared the breakfast table and tried to wipe the memories of the morning away.

Jasmine sat quietly on the porch. I looked towards the back yard and saw one of the two dogs digging back in the field. Isaac tore some of pages out of the colouring book and they blew across the front lawn.

Just then Lisa pulled up in an old rusty pick-up truck. She got out and walked over to the porch with a bottle of beer in one hand and a joint in the other.

Jasmine watched as she handed me the joint. I took a deep drag. Jasmine's eyes widened in horror and she began to cry. And I remembered. I remembered the look on her face four and one half years ago when the police handcuffed me and took me away.

It was the same look.

I took another drag on the joint and asked Lisa if she wanted to go for some more beer. She nodded and I got in the truck.

I looked over at the house. Cress took a slug at the whisky. Isaac tore another page from the book. Jasmine curled up on the floor of the porch and I saw her small body shaking. The two dogs were playing with a small object back in the field.

Lisa punched the gas pedal and handed me the joint. I took a drag and reached for her beer. She smiled and passed it over to me. The liquid slid down my throat but the taste in my mouth was sour. Only a shot of heroin could get rid of that taste. The terror of things slipping away ate to the core of my being.

The truck straddled the country road. I watched the white line in the center of the road disappear beneath the vehicle as we hurtled down the highway like a meteor out of control.

KIMBERLY JENNER
untitled

KIMBERLY JENNER
untitled

KIMBERLY JENNER
untitled

HEDIA MARON
Appendage

HEDIA MARON
Ray's Illusion

KAREN YUNG
Breathing Nature

KAREN YUNG
untitled

BERTRAM GRANT

The Boxer In Society: An Interview

PAPITO

When I asked him who his favorite fighter was, the answer came swiftly: "Manos de Piedra."

"Really, you like Roberto Duran best?" I responded, a bit surprised that this angelic looking boy would regard Duran, the notorious "Hands-of-Stone," as his favorite boxer.

"Yeah," he said, maintaining his rhythm on the speed bag.

Sure, Duran was a great fighter, but that was like saying Boris Karloff was your favorite actor. Roberto Duran was simply murderous. No style. No class. No sportsmanship. Just an uncouth, unrelenting dispenser of punishment.

But it figured; Papito and Duran had things in common. Papito was born in the Dominican Republic, and like the Panamanian Duran, spoke very little English. Both had little or no education. Both were exceedingly poor.

As we moved over to the heavy bag, I asked Papito why he started boxing. "Keeps me out of trouble," he responded in broken English in between sharp right hooks to the bag. It was two years ago when Papito first came to the gym. He was referred to the Boxing Club by one of his counselors from the Department of Youth Services. Papito had spent some time in lock-up after being caught in a stolen vehicle. It was Papito's propensity for stealing cars that had landed him six months in the Judge Connolly Lock-up Facility in Roslindale. "I didn't speak to nobody," he said between breaths, his punches ripping into the leather. "Nobody spoke Spanish, so when I try to speak English they laughed at me." One day Papito's frustration culminated in a fight with one of his peers. "I couldn't stop punching him, you know. Even when he started bleeding, I just couldn't stop. It was like dancing, you know, when you feel the rhythm you don't wanna stop." It was then that Papito knew he could fight back.

Papito lived with his aunt and five cousins in a two bedroom apartment. His mother, a career prostitute and drug addict, was doing time in prison. His father, whom he had never met, was married to another woman and lived somewhere in the Dominican Republic. I asked him about his living arrangements with his aunt. "She don't want me to live there," he explained. "She keep saying I eat too much

and I don't make no money. She keep telling me to go back to the Dominican Republic. She think I'm too stupid to survive in this country."

"What are your plans for the future, return to school?" I asked.

"No school for me, man, I wanna be lightweight champion of the world."

With rivulets of perspiration rolling down the tight sinews of his young body, Papito moved from the bag and began fighting with his shadow. I marveled at his technique. Another Oscar de la Hoya in the making, I thought, as he delivered double jabs and uppercuts to the swift moving shadow moving on the wall. But even while shadow boxing, his eyes were mortally wary, as if his darkened image were ready to hurl a knockout blow at him. Then and there something flashed. The child peeked through those black Latino eyes. I saw, for a brief moment, beyond the facade. Behind Papito's chiseled physique was a fifteen year old boy embarking on a lonely journey in this world. In a foreign land with no money, education or family, he was destined for a head on collision with Life. For Papito, it will indeed require Hands-of-Stone to repel the onslaught of woes that will inevitably befall him.

SEAMUS

The amorphous blob splattered across the diameter of his face had once actually been a nose. A hideous thing to behold, it nonetheless testified to the fate of most white boxers. As hockey players are often indoctrinated into their craft with the loss of teeth, the white pugilist must brave the arduous ritual of nose dismantlement.

Seamus was born and raised in Charlestown. Even though he hailed from this notoriously racist section of Boston, I liked him, mostly because he was blunt. With him, political correctness was out the window. As the consummate fighter he pulled no punches inside or outside the ring. Seamus started boxing at ten, after neighborhood fears of a black takeover during Boston's infamous forced busing crisis. "It was like we were being invaded by youse guys. Youse guys really scared us backed then. We wanted to keep our neighborhood Irish, and there ain't nutting wrong wit dat."

Seamus had sparred earlier in the day, and was on his way out of the gym when I ran into him. His hair, not yet dried from a recent shower, lay flat on his head in the style of the ancient Romans. The perfumed aroma of body soap emanating from him was a weak contrast against the prevailing funk of sweat throughout the gym.

Seamus was a good fighter. He had compiled a record of sixteen wins against fourteen losses in the middleweight division. At six feet even and 160 pounds, his quickness reminded me of Billy Conn, the

light heavyweight, who nearly beat Joe Louis for the heavyweight crown.

"Busing scared you so much that you felt you needed to learn how to fight?" I asked.

"Yeah, we were scared of youse guys," he told me, constantly sniffing through that disfigured nose. "You know, crime, drugs and everything. But to tell you the truth, guy, it wasn't really youse guys so much that pissed us off. Youse guys were little pee-ons like us. It was them WASPS and Jews and them friggin' Brahmins who started the whole thing. They tried to shit on us, sending youse guys into our neighborhood. Did you ever think about why they didn't send youse guys into Wellesley or friggin' Newton?"

It was well over twenty years since the buses bringing black children rolled into Charlestown. It was probably there that they met their most vehement resistance. Back in the seventies, the mere mentioning of Charlestown would put fear in a brother's heart. With incalculable incidents of violence and of beatings, the fearless Townies succeeded in putting Charlestown on the black man's map of infamy.

"Did you get into any fights with black kids?" I asked him.

"At first I did. Then my mother pulled me and my brother out of school."

Seamus was part of the Diaspora of white kids from public schools during the early seventies. Though his folks had little money, they scrounged to send Seamus and his brother to private school. Seamus ended up leaving private school because his parents couldn't make the payments. Instead of returning to public school with the black kids, Seamus and his brothers dropped out.

"I started boxing Golden Glove at thirteen. It was hard work because I wasn't a natural," he explained, "but even then I could hit hard."

"Now that you are a professional, is there any resentment when you fight a black fighter?"

"A little. Because there are hardly any white boxers out there today. I feel if I don't really let this guy have it, us white guys are gonna become extinct."

"What are your goals as a boxer?"

"To beat Roy Jones and become middleweight champion of the world."

"What will you do after boxing?"

"Don't know yet. I'll cross that bridge when I come to it."

MR. HAROLD

I met Mr. Harold at a gym in Quincy where he trains young boxers. Upon meeting him, I could not restrain the urge to count the many scars

that mar his face; from the bottom of his chin to the peak of his hairless dome, his face was an unsightly myriad of marks.

He was born in the South End of Boston in 1937 to a single mother who had just made her way north from Mississippi. Though his father split when Mr. Harold was five, the boxer could still recall the nights of rage. The flying objects, the broken glass, and the image of the ominous silhouette striking his crouching mother remain imbedded in his memory.

It was at age eleven that he first heard himself described as delinquent. He had been sent to the principal's office for fighting in class. There, like some sorcerer leveling a curse, the principal declared, "I'll see to it that you're in reform school, boy, where you delinquents belong." The word had a nice ring to it, much more pleasant than "nigger," which he had come to associate himself with. For once he had an identity. He could now claim the dubious distinction of being a "juvenile delinquent."

By the time he was seventeen he had been in and out of reform school. From armed robbery, assault, to grand theft larceny, his juvenile record was lengthy. "We were poor," he confided to me. "My mother had nothing. She didn't care whether I stole or not because she couldn't provide for me. By being locked up at least I could eat." At eighteen he got sent up for an eight-year prison bid. It was while in prison that he discovered his talent for boxing. "In the joint we had a boxing league. No one could beat me. I was what they called a *scientific fighter*. I didn't hit hard, but I knew how to throw punches you'd never see coming. I was champion until I was paroled in 1960."

The scientific fighter is a phenomenon in the realm of boxing. Even in the pantheon there are only a handful of boxers who are considered scientific. Gene Tunney and Muhammad Ali are among the few heavyweights whose styles are classified as scientific. The scientific boxer can see the big picture. He'll take all his opponent can throw until he discovers his opponent's weakness. When the opening is found, the scientific boxer commences an unyielding exploitation of his opponent's mistakes.

In 1967, Mr. Harold fought his first big name contender. "He was a guy from Cleveland who had lost to Archie Moore but floored him several times during the fight. He was a southpaw and very tricky, so I had to be extra careful with this fellow." Mr. Harold turned in his chair and pointed to a framed black and white picture on the wall that showed him with his arms raised victoriously. "Split decision, but I beat him."

That night in 1967 was the apex of Mr. Harold's career as a professional boxer. A string of defeats by average fighters followed. Still, he kept fighting. "I made fifty bucks a night fighting them young

boys. Yeah, all them shots to head hurt but, hey, it was a living and it kept me out of jail."

In 1977, at age forty, Mr. Harold retired from boxing. Though he sustained 29 losses, he was proud of the 36 men he whipped. "Let me tell you something, young man," he said, pointing a pedagogical finger at me. "I ain't ashamed of them losses. Life is a constant loss. I don't worry to much about my losses, I focus more on my victories." He pointed to a well dressed young man who was jotting down some information onto a clipboard. "See there, that's my greatest victory—my son—he's an accountant. He keeps the books here at his daddy's place."

To be born is to inherit a lot that is forever perilous. From the moment an animal is cast into this world it is besieged by natural forces seeking to retract its life. Thomas Hobbes described life in a state of nature as "poor, brutish, and short." It is indeed this Hobbesian state of nature from whence the boxer comes.

The means by which the human animal counteracts the state of nature is through the collective participation of culture. Note that the boxer always hails from outside the established system. He is always poor and invariably devoid of the cutural imprint of education. The boxer therefore symbolizes the human struggle against Death in the Hobbesian state of nature. We watch the boxer on television or in the arena from our detached positions as secured members of the culture. And how we marvel at him as he mortally struggles in the ring. We admire his technique and his ability to elude or withstand the blows of Death. And deep inside we envy his ability to fight. For, even on our cultured side, where we repel Death with income, family, education, healthcare, politics, we still fear the inevitable blow of Death.

We have been perennially inspired by the boxer's gallant effort to raise himself and his family up from the basement of society. We thus owe our gratitude to boxers past and present. As a society we must show our gratitude by extending the amenities of culture to every sector of society.

NANCY HEWITT

Awakenings

Inspired by the writers of Camp Wild Canary

I knew they were awake. I heard them
rustling underground, heard fibers quivering
within each bulb, one bulb nudging
the next, a chain reaction that built until
the whole bed vibrated like a tuning fork.
The soil began to warm and loosen, fissures
began to open, little earthquakes rumbled
everywhere. Pale shoots began to make
their way toward light. Root threads dove
deeper down. Predicatable, that is to say.
No anarchy involved. But it was their laughter
that took me by surprise, a thunder of joy
escaping, barreling through the meadow.
I didn't expect the daffodils to be so raucous.

Playing God in the Carrot Patch

I don't want to thin these carrots, but the lacy tops
poke up too thickly in the row. Too many seeds spilled
in that spot, I remember now, the gray fly-away seeds
like caraways, hard to control in the May breeze.
Should have been done weeks ago, but the plants
so fresh and green I wanted room for all. And now
they're not thriving, so it falls to me to decide
which ones are likely to survive. I start
with the shortest, slightest ones nestled
next to much stronger plants. Still, when I urge
their fragile roots from the soil I feel resistance.
The pre-carrot root is pale peach, an inch long,
slim and delicate, white thready root hairs
still holding specks of soil. A quick toss
to the compost pile. The choices get harder
further down the row: three seedlings in a bunch,
the middle stem the thinnest but its top the tallest.
If I take it out, will the others spread out
and strengthen? Do I make choices based
on position in the row? On height of tops? On
thickness of stems? In a dense clump of rail plants,
which might flourish if given more space?
What are the rules underground?
I get bolder as the sun beats stronger
on my back. The miniature carrot roots
I wrench from the soil get longer
and more carrot-like, but I can't care.
Not if I want to eat carrots.

THOMAS JAMES

Mater Dolorosa

To be thoroughly conversant with a Man's heart, is to take our final lesson in the iron-clasped volume of despair.
—Edgar Allan Poe (1809-45)

My mother has a severe chemical imbalance. In layman's terms, one might call her crazy. Once my mother took a trip to her parents' home. She went into the bathroom, locked the door, and began to stab herself in the stomach while screaming, "My God! My God!! My God!!!" This is what it means to have a severe chemical imbalance.

Once we went to visit my mother in a place by the name of Glenside Hospital, one of the many homes away from home she would frequent during my childhood. Seeing her in an abode where most of the patients had to be physically restrained in order to safely move them from one building to another dealt a mighty blow to my preconception of Mom-hood.

Here was my mother, the woman I ran to when I fell off my bicycle, who kissed my boo-boos and made them all better. Here was my mother, the person who cooked "basghetti" and meatballs and cut off the crusts on my PB&Js. Here was my mother, the woman who cleaned the house, my clothes, the dishes, and still had time to roll up the cuffs on my hand-me-downs so I wouldn't trip and hurt myself. Here was my mother in this PLACE.

She didn't belong here! She was my mother! Who was this shit-stain of a doctor who told my father that she had to stay here!? Surely my dad would fix things, would make it all right. Sadly, looking back on this moment, I believe I saw only a stoic father and not a spouse in misery. Children see so much, yet so little.

It was that same day, as we left the grounds of the hospital with my mother running alongside the car crying, "Please don't go! Please don't leave me here!" that I learned the meaning of the word "despair." Despair had taken residence in the place where my heart used to be and my heart . . . well, that I left with my mother.

STAN KAPLAN

Haydn's *Seven Last Words*

(ending on a rising note:)
Ta da, da da, da da, da dum.
Once more, *Die sieben letzten Worte,**
a piece I didn't like at all
at first, though the start seemed
so familiar. One time through,
Die sieben letzten Worte,
I didn't like or understand it.

And then, *Die sieben letzten Worte,*
I listened to the last part first,
again, again, until it rumbled
in my head. Then
the central instrumental,
the quiet horns, so sweet
I could not help but repeat and
repeat and repeat them.
I played it through,
Die sieben letzten Worte.
I played it through
some four times more. I listened
till I saw it all,
Die sieben letzten Worte,
and understood and came

to love it. I've played it now
so many times, it seems
a different piece,
Die sieben letzen Worte,
from when I heard it first (or it
may be a different me).

The way he ends it, *Mein Gott!*
Trumpets and Drum,
Trumpets and Drum, Dum-Dum-Dum.

* Haydn's oratorio, *The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross*

KEVIN KINSELLA

Nowadays, Grave Diggers Ride

Nowadays, grave diggers ride
in orange pick-up trucks and wear
down and leather vests over
their heavy, gray sweatshirts.
They drive along service roads,
shared only with taxi cabs
hired by superstitious mourners
who won't walk through the grave sites
for fear of seeing their own names
etched in the granite or sleek marble.

Mostly, they push dumpster carts
up and down the stony aisles,
picking up tumbled flowerpots—
not thinking to right them or
set them straight on the tombstones
but throwing them out like trash.
Still, the mourners always come back,
bringing more roses with them;
setting them softly atop
the carved stones, remembering.

But there's a job to be done:
raking out tulips and poinsettias
littering the cemetery
with their sad, bright colors and
who will be there to stop them when
you can't come around and tend your
quiet crypts, molding in the rain?
Who will pick up the petals, floating
in thick puddles, to sprinkle them
under the carved names of the dead?

BRIAN LIDDY

The Roots of Division: An Overview of the Anglo-Irish Problem

The great only appear great because we are on our knees, let us arise.

—James Larkin

The history of the Irish nation is a history of invasion upon invasion. Prior to the English efforts of colonisation, the Irish had succeeded admirably enough in assimilating all foreigners into their own Celtic culture, and thus reducing the invading armies to nought. The English, however, were a different problem, a problem that began in the distant past, but manifests itself today in the ongoing struggle over the six counties of Northern Ireland.

British colonial efforts in Ireland were inadequate, and the nature of these efforts was to create a division amongst the two peoples as deeply rifted as any in the history of modern times. The need to establish hegemony over the people is a fundamental requirement of a colonising nation; but hegemony does not simply refer to the domination of a central power over its subjects. The subjects themselves are an integral part of the hegemonic system, and it is only by their consent that the supremacy of the central authority exists. Hegemony incorporates cultural, political, economic, and spiritual aspects. Each aspect is as relevant as the next, though the degree of their importance can vary. This variation depends largely on the degree of discrepancy that exists between the ideal forms of the aspects as they appear to the masses, and the ideal forms as they appear to the ruling class.[1]

It is clear that the cultural differences between the English and Irish peoples were vastly at odds from the very beginning of their unfortunate relationship with one another. The Irish were an essentially agrarian people with a land based economy, and their sense of law and order existed in a system of local codes whose beginnings can be found in the very heart of pagan Ireland. More importantly, the Irish were a race of Catholics, and their

spirituality lay in a sort of Paganised Catholicism which the English saw as savage and irreverent. The simple fact that the English and Irish cultures, their outlooks on life, even the very foundations of human existence, have been incompatible in a very real sense, does not necessarily mean that the English could not establish themselves successfully as rulers over the land. Their greatest mistake was not in wishing to create a colony of a neighbour—though there are problems inherent in physical proximity, the direct knowledge of the relative affluence of England's natural subjects in a similar social stratum being one.[2] The greatest mistake lay in their establishing, as a governing symbol, an "Irish" ascendency class that was as alien to the people of Ireland as the English themselves. As Terry Eagleton has observed in his tremendous study on the implications of the English presence on modern Irish culture: "To achieve hegemony, colonial rule must be refracted through the traditions of those it governs, miming their cultural gestures and conforming itself to their customs."[3] No effort was ever made to integrate an ascendency class into the existing Irish culture of the day. On the contrary, the ascendency introduced was the antithesis of all that was naturally Irish, and it forced on the people a culture that was not only alien to them, but never even sought to include them. This is not merely a modern concept; it was an essential part of Burke's theory, and as Thomas More wrote: "It has usually been the policy of conquerors and colonists to blend as much as possible with the people among whom they establish themselves—to share with them the advantage of their own institutions—to remove all invidious distinctions that might recall the memory of their original invasion or intrusion."[4]

The ascendency was planted in Ireland and given the authority of the British Empire, despite the fact that the people of Ireland refused, at all points, to give their consent. The seed of future revolution was planted in this tremendously idiotic manoeuvre, which saw the creation of a permanent cultural, political, and economic rift establish itself between the two lands. The failure of the English to create even the illusion of right conduct is heightened by the fact that there exists in Ireland no substantial middle class, who by their very existence can draw some of the blame for giant political and economic blunders. When something goes wrong in Ireland, the eyes of the people fall inevitably upon the ascendency class. This is not to suggest that the blame did not lie in that quarter, it generally did; but the growing middle class in England was being successfully used as a screen to hide the blunders of the aristocracy, and thus, to perpetuate a flourishing illusion of a benevolent and an intellectually superior landed class. England's hegemonic system was

a far more assimilated affair, and chief amongst the reasons for its success was the marriage of a landed gentry to an aesthetic image of beauty. To believe one is in the presence of aesthetic beauty is to consent to the society that produces such an aesthetic.[5] In this manner, art becomes the buffer of society; it is what gives credence to the "natural order" of society, despite the fact that such a natural order could have quite easily been something else. When we read, for example, a Jane Austen novel, we never question the foundation of the hegemony upon which her novel is based; we learn to question lesser things, such as whether society should endorse a marriage between Darcy and Elizabeth despite their different social backgrounds, and while we engage ourselves with this truly aesthetic issue as it appears in Austen, we are giving our consent to the hegemonic rule from which the novel springs.[6]

With the planted ascendency came the establishment of the Church of Ireland as the politically sanctioned Church of an overwhelmingly Catholic land. The force used to extract tithes from a people who cared nothing for Protestantism was both spiritually defunct, and politically naive. Forcing the Irish onto petty acres of the worst land, and charging them exorbitant rents for its use, does not lend itself to the establishment of hegemony. Was it truly believed that a people would merely roll over to the ways of an alien culture, when that culture only served to impoverish the land and bring the indigenous people to their knees? Bringing them to their knees was bad enough, but bringing them to their knees before a manifestation of God that was totally repugnant to their own ideas of theology was a political blunder of near biblical proportions.

Revisionist historians, including Irish ones, have developed a theory of the famine which suggests that the English are not really to blame. Were this not such a savage attack on over one million people who died as a result of that cataclysmic event, it would almost be humorous. On the eve of the famine, the population of Ireland had swelled to nearly nine million souls. These people were forced to survive on one million acres of potato crop, while twenty million arable acres "belonged" to the ascendency class.[7] When the crop failed, the Irish had nothing to cling to, nothing to rise them above the starvation. It has been suggested that this was likewise a bad time for the landlords, and while it is true that the famine was economically devastating to many landlords, their numbers were not found crawling into corners of graveyards in order that they might die on consecrated ground. How could a nation on the verge of modernity, in the Europe-of-plenty, in the mid-nineteenth century, starve? When famine broke, there was enough grain in Ireland to feed the nation, but the grain was exported. The British government was directly

responsible for the safe-guarding of a people who gave that government a means of economic security: with the power of domination comes obligation. The British, on all moral, political, economic, and cultural grounds, were obliged to relieve the starving Irish, a people who starved due to the economic draining of their land by an oppressor who now refused to help. When the British did send aid, it was limited. They did not wish to over-involve themselves financially, for fear that it might prevent charitable organisations from sharing the monetary burden.

The Famine can scarcely be believed in today's Western world. It is, as Terry Eagleton suggests,[8] too real an event to establish itself in the aesthetic culture of modern Ireland, and yet it is central to that culture. Representation of the famine is noticeably absent in the country's literature, and yet, much of that culture stems from that very point. The famine is embedded in the Irish psyche, but it fails to emerge in any real sense. With the notable exception of Liam O'Flaherty's masterpiece, *Famine*, the Great Hunger goes by mysteriously unnoticed, yet ever-present. If famine is, as Malthus will have us believe, "the last, the most dreadful resource of nature,"[9] then nature, it would seem, needs enticing to react as she does. For only in the most rigid sense can nature be held responsible for Ireland's famine: as the popular peasant saying goes, "God sent the potato-blight, but the English caused the famine."

"Ireland after the famines of the mid-nineteenth century," writes Declan Kilberd, "was a sort of nowhere, waiting for its appropriate images and symbols to be inscribed in it."[10] The fact that those symbols, when they finally arrive, reflect a darkness that has become synonymous with contemporary Irish literature, is a reflection itself of the psychological rooting of famine on the Irish mind and soul.[11] The consequence of famine in Ireland is to create in the essential Irish soul a belief that under the control of her imperial neighbours, Ireland will never be at peace, and never be truly secure. Countless rebellions, founded less on a nationalistic ideal and more on an outcry against injustice, gradually evolved into fully fledged separatist ideologies that culminated in the Easter Rising of 1916, and the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921. The establishment of the Irish Free State saw the Irish enthrone themselves upon the very hegemony that they had wished to overthrow. Thus, independence from England became less of a political event and more of a pseudo-cultural one. The essentially English aesthetic[12] which never took root in Ireland was nonetheless present by sheer coercion alone, and the building of Celtic culture upon this foundation created a strange hybrid sort of literature which achieved its most splendid heights in the works of W.B. Yeats.

The question of Northern Ireland, left unsettled by the boundary commission's failure to secure the six counties and integrate them back into Ireland as a whole, grows more complicated with the passage of time. Time, it would appear, is the sole means by which rights of ownership can be assessed. The theory, propounded heavily by Burke and others, states that all was founded on an initial act of violence. The coercive act which brought about hegemony in the first place, must now hide not merely behind the aesthetic, but hide also in the passage of time which creates a veil of historic justification for what was essentially an act void of all reason. Reason and logic, then, have been created from the violent and coercive nature of non-reason. "Society," writes Eagleton, "springs from an illicit source or aboriginal crime, which in the case of Freud is parricide and in the case of Burke those acts of forcible expropriation from which all of our current titles and estates descend."[13]

For those attempting to understand the current conflict in Northern Ireland, a great problem arises; the Ulster-Scots, Protestants, Loyalists, whatever term one chooses to use, are historically rooted in the six counties. Has the passage of time justified their existence there? Has the original crime, that aboriginal crime discussed by Eagleton, been the necessary crime to establish that people as rightful owners of the soil? Do the native Irish, Celtic, Catholic, Republican, or whatever term one chooses to use, not have the same right to an argument that was recognisably valid two hundred years ago? The Republican answer to this problem is summed up well in M.L.R. Smith's excellent study when he quotes renowned republican sympathiser and journalist, Jack Bennett:

> . . . ultimately, whether they (Loyalists) remain British or not is entirely up to Britain to decide. And should Britain decide otherwise, it is difficult to imagine what degree of determination would enable them to remain British in any realistic sense, unless that determination included the ability to row a boat [presumably to Great Britain].[14]

The Republican answer, then, is to take the Loyalists out of the loop. The struggle involves the Irish, the British, and the Loyalists, who due to their effective lack of real political say, are merely an obstacle in the way of an essentially Anglo-Irish affair. Smith is careful to point out, however, that while this appears to be the general method of removing the problem caused by a historical rooting of a Loyalist class in Northern Ireland, the Republican movement is at best vague as to the place of Northern Protestants in a unified Irish State. At worst, they are downright hostile, but this

hostility is drawn more from the insurmountable problem of drawing a satisfactory conclusion to the affair, and less from any sense of religious hostility. In 1986, Republicans were speaking of loyalists as *"colonisers who will always wage terror against the colonised as a form of blackmail against the imperial power when it threatens to upset their hegemony"*[15] (emphasis in original).

The struggle between the Irish and English cultures for an historical right, a right that began with coercion, whether of English origin, or of Irish at any earlier date during the Gaels settlement there, appears before us in the guise of a McGahern-like wheel, forever turning, forever creating itself anew from the persistent survival instinct of the old. It would be an interesting drama, were it not so violently real.

ENDNOTES

1. This is not to suggest that there is no room for coercion; Burke himself is quick to defend the coercive act in so far as it instigates colonisation, and coercion must exist, hidden in the background, to counteract subversion; but coercion can neither be the sole aspect of hegemony, nor even the dominant one.

2. The use of the word affluence may be misleading; the conditions of the peasantry were appalling throughout Britain, but conditions in Ireland were far worse, so much worse in fact as to seem to justify the rather harsh term.

3. Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and The Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995),41.

4. Thomas More, *Memoirs of Captain Rock* (London 1824), 12-13, as quoted in Eagleton, *Heathcliff and The Great Hunger*, 1995.

5. Again, this consent does not need to be an overwhelming and whole-hearted support of the hegemonic system in operation; the society, if it has been successful in its aspirations to achieve hegemony, can withstand a great deal of discontent from the people as long as this discontent does not shake the foundations of the hegemony itself.

6. I do not mean to question whether or not the English system is *good* or *bad* in any moral or political sense, I merely wish to point out that the consent of the people to hegemonic rule, in any society, is aided greatly by the literature of that society, and the foundations upon which that literature is built.

7. A million acres of land will feel the burden of nine million trying to reap subsistence; twenty one million acres will not. The problem in Ireland was not the great number of its population but the distribution of the land amongst them.

8. Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and The Great Hunger*, 1995, 14-15.

9. Parson Malthus as quoted in, Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Worldly*

Philosophers (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 90.

10. Declan Kilbred, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Random House, 1995), 115.

11. There are other elements behind the darkness of Irish literature; twentieth century existential philosophy lies behind much of the work of writers such as Beckett and McGahern, but the latter also embodies in his fiction, a sense of parochial loss that is directly descendent from an Irish failure to bring about change in the English system of hegemony established during the plantations.

12. Eagleton, in his *Heathcliff and The Great Hunger*, 1995, points out that the essentially English aesthetic, which sees nature in terms of a landscape painting, is noticeably absent in Ireland. It is not that the Irish do not associate nature and beauty, for they do, but to the Irish the land is something that is to be worked; it is the means of survival, and barren land cannot be given a romantic description as it can amongst the English, because the Irish see it as merely barren. Beauty in nature, to the Irish, is a land that will yield survival for man, it is not aesthetic beauty of its own.

13. Ibid, 43.

14. J. Bennett, *The Northern Conflict and British Power*, Irish Sovereignty Movement Pamphlet, no. 1, 1973, p. 12. as quoted in M.L.R. Smith, Fighting For Ireland? *The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (London: Routledge, 1995), 27.

15. *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, 28 August 1986. Quoted in M.L.R. Smith, Fighting for Ireland? 1995, 25.

BRIAN LIDDY

Nostalgia

Have you none of your own language? What are they teaching you in that school beyond? When I was a boy, they'd beat it into you. Do you hear me? Beat it into you, they would.

My grandfather fought in the Easter Rising. No. It was the troubles that followed that he was involved in. They hid IRA men in all the corners of the house. Hid them under beds. Beneath the stairs. Guns were found sporadically throughout my youth. Found in old disused barns. One was found in the hay shed by my brother; it had been wrapped clumsily in an old coat and buried half-heartedly in the dirt. That was before I was alive, and my brother never asked whether it had been fired or not. It never crossed his mind to ask if it had been used, either on the English or on our own during the Civil War. I fancied, in my childhood, that it had been used on some English agent. It had been drawn by the leader of one of the flying columns and discharged with all the accuracy of a just cause. Later, maybe it had been used at Beal na Bla. My people were Dev-men. Munster Republicans.

Here's a shilling, Darragh. Come on and I'll drop you to school. What time did your father get in last night? That late. Jesus, he's a martyr for that stuff.

My name was never Darragh. My grandfather refused to call me by any other name. He said I should never have been Christened the name I was. He said it was an English name and that they'd had enough influence over our lives. Evenings he'd come down to the house and sit in the kitchen with my mother, telling her time and again that she was an unusually patient and loving woman, that she deserved better than his son could ever hope to offer. The dog would sit by him. Tail brushing the lino. Head tilted toward the tall figure of my grandfather who rarely touched the animal. The dog, too, suffered the ignominy of my grandfather's stubborn refusal to call anything by foreign names. Every dog in the neighbourhood responded to his call, for he called them all Bran. Why did he call it a shilling?

They shouldn't have done that. We'd never have done that in my time. Sometimes you'd nearly think they were just thugs, not running a war at all. Missiles and time bombs how are you. Women and children, and no regard for the Church.

At school, we'd deny their importance when teachers were present. They are not the same organisation at all, our History teacher would tell us. No comparison. The old men had principles. Now they're just murdering people. Night after night the BBC news would talk about them, and it sent a warm feeling through me to hear the words repeated over and over again: Ireland. The Irish. The Dublin government responded. Sophisticated terrorist organisation. My grandfather would pretend to ignore the television, saying that he'd heard enough about the mayhem that went on in those parts of the country. He'd have the newspaper opened, obscuring his line of vision, but he'd never turn the page. The harsher words of the announcer would meet with a rough crackling of the newsprint and a deep clearing of the throat. My grandmother, a small-framed woman forever dangling from the end of a More cigarette, would gaze as if transfixed by the colours and images that flickered on the screen. It's hard to have sympathy with them sometimes, she would mutter, but sure, war's a funny thing.

Saturdays in town they'd stand outside the Church near the city centre in groups of four or five. The newspaper would be held aloft, large red letters spelling out the Irish: An Phoblacht. Time and again I watched their faces, wondering if they'd ever killed a man. What was it like to kill a man?

They shouldn't be here. We don't want to hurt anyone, but they shouldn't be in our country. They've been here for hundreds of years. What are they if not Northern Irish? Where can they go? They should have thought of that before.

I'll never forget when we heard them banging in the door. We made a rush for the window. Flannery got out ahead of me. My feet hadn't even hit the ground when I heard the shot. We couldn't hang around to find out, but we knew they'd got Tadhg. We found out later that they'd shot him in the back. Murdering Bastards is all they were, and I hope they suffer an eternity of tortures for what they did to us. To think of it, had I been sitting one chair to my left I'd have been last to that shagging window.

Week after week I'd stand on the opposite side of the road. I'd tell myself that all it would take was a bit of guts and why should I be afraid. I give them the money, take a newspaper and walk away.

What could be easier? Instead I'd start talking with the other crowd; the Marxist Militants that sold their newspaper at the next corner. We're not an organisation, they'd tell me, if anybody ever asks we're not an organisation. They'd arrest us. They have all our names. Paranoia ran deep amongst them and they believed that the moment of international revolution was on the horizon. I'd read their newspapers but they were full of harsh sounding political words that made the most simple adventure sound like a scientific formula. My mother would curse me from a height for bringing Bolshevik literature into the house and she'd take it from me. Days later it could be found soaking up the dog's urine, and an occasional headline would stick in my mind from where it lay near glued to the lino. In all our years, we never had a dog that was house trained. The smell of stale urine wafted through the house, a familiar fragrance that became part of our environment.

Once, and I'm not proud of it. It had to be done. I had little or no choice in the matter. Can you understand that, Darragh? It's not something that I'm proud of. It's not something I'm proud of.

I gave him the coins and took the paper from his hands. He watched me carefully for a moment but said nothing, and when I walked away, I felt his eyes following me as I moved. Cover to cover, I read it. In the bathroom, I read it. The black print came away on my hands and the blood boiled and burned beneath my skin. Why could I not have been born back then? It seemed so much more clear cut then; an Irishman had a duty. But the cause is the same, I thought. They are fighting for the same goal, fighting to unite a country that has been beaten and plundered since time immemorial. I convinced myself that I supported the struggle, brought the newspaper to school and watched as the eyes of my friends popped. Where did you get it? You didn't. You're done for now. Did they ask for your name? Were the guards watching? I bet you anything the guards'll have your name. Like the leader of a flying column, I dismissed the worries of my classmates. To hell with the guards. Free staters.

Ah, Collins was a good man till he went astray. He should never have signed that treaty. Never. Dev knew. What was Collins anyway, only a great killer. He never had the skills. Do you understand me, Darragh? Never had the know how.

I never bought another copy. I went once more and stood gazing across at the sellers. A tight sensation in my stomach and the distinct sensation to empty out my bowels prevented me from

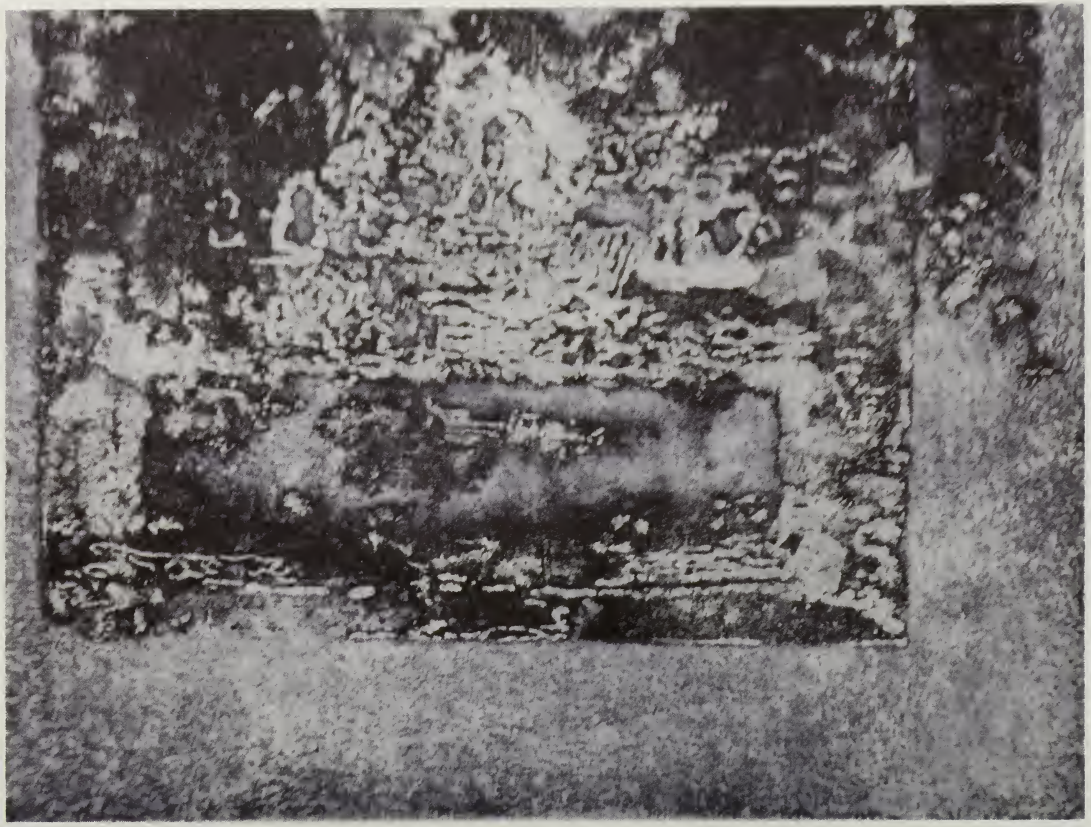
approaching them again.

Enniskillen hurt me. I remember sitting there in the house, my eyes on the television, and watching as an old man told of how his daughter, a young nurse, had been blown to bits in the blast. I remember watching him, and I couldn't dismiss what he was saying as propaganda. Something in his voice, in that face laden with sorrow. His daughter dead and no curses from his mouth. He had a Northern Irish accent, and I couldn't tell if it were Shankill or Falls. My grandfather looked up from his newspaper and stared trance-like at the tube. Gangsters, he said, and left the room. Numbed, I went upstairs and thought about ripping up the newspaper that lay hidden amongst old schoolwork in the back of the wardrobe. What good would that do, I thought, and hid it away in the attic instead.

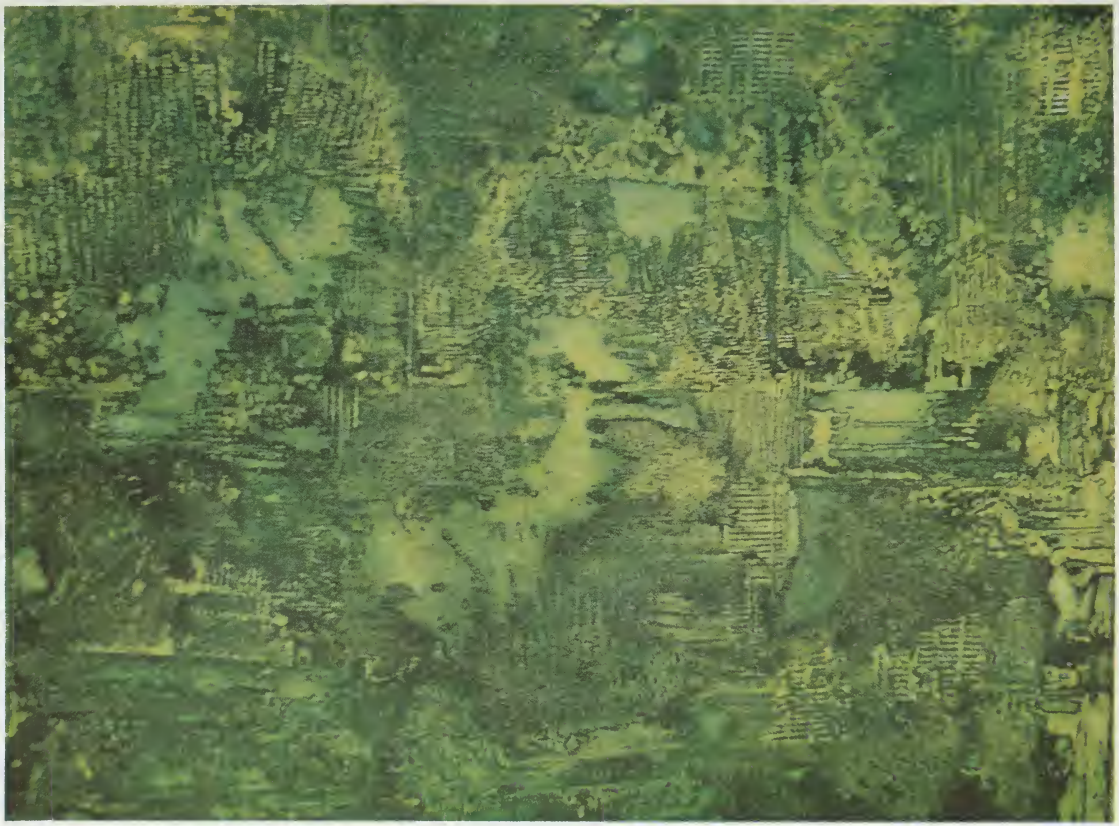
Once, and I'm not proud of it. You have to look at the symbol. Do you understand that, Darragh? You have to look at the symbol. If you think of the person, if you look on him as an individual, you're in deep trouble. Never think of the person, only what he represents.

When he died, it was an ordinary affair. He slipped away quietly enough. Took to a bit of whiskey to numb out the pain he was feeling and wondered once why he hadn't discovered its wondrous powers years ago. The priest was charitable. The old man had been a great Churchgoer. Even when the health failed him, a priest would come to the house and give him communion. It's a great religion, he used to say, especially the confessional. Takes away the sins of the world. I never heard of a will of any kind. My grandmother gave me his medals and left me run through the books that were stacked high in his musty old room that smelled heavily of moth balls. There was a tricolour present at the funeral but no ceremony of any kind, save the low mumbling of the mourners and a word or two heard here and there about Republicanism; somebody said something about deValera, but I couldn't catch it. As we walked away from the cemetery, toward the cars that had been parked at a distance, I saw my grandmother being helped down the gravel path. It wouldn't be long, I remember thinking, it wouldn't be long now. As she sat into the car, her eyes caught mine. There was no terrific sorrow in them: a resigned look lay upon her as she stared directly at me before the door closed, and she was gone. The house was filled with a restrained joviality. Stories went round, exaggerated stories that resembled no truth that I had ever heard from his lips, and later, much later, somebody sang a rebel song. Trembling like a leaf, I hummed along with him.

JENNIFER MANZELLA
Evolution
computer imaging & etching



KARA TUTUNJIAN
He Slipped into My Drink with the Bromide
etching



KARA TUTUNJIAN
¿Dónde Está el Señor Yoda ?
etching

JOANNE DESMOND
My Favorite Things
photo-etching

LARRY MADDEN

The Battle's End

When the door closed behind me
what had been
was no more
death's dark invitation, RSVP
no not for me!

In a military hotel,
double occupancy room
put up together awaiting medical care
in this room of self repair

The sound of boots marching
above and below us
behind our door
were not able to harm
our mending ears

Traveling parallel paths of life
unknown to each other
except for here and now
the truth is:
We were together for years

behind walls of fear
toy soldiers on a parade field
groomed for all to see
but don't say the word
Queer

What was in the air
when self destructive voices
spoke no more, instead
an ancient whisper
come here

to white cotton sheets
starched and cool in the night
melting lies rolled down his face
and mine, to cumulous pillows

My throat feels like it is closing down
listen to my breathing
my pulse rocks the bed and in my head
I hear it pounding
does he?

dizzying breathing, the room is spinning
oh, hold me tight
I can't fight no more
his muscles squeezing hairy hard
in surrender all feels right tonight

fears and sweat dissipate
drifting to sleep in each other's arms
it will be all right
because we're queers
behind the door.

HITOMI MINAMI
Time
photo etching & woodblock print

JASON GREEN
Fertility Goddess
computer imaging

ALEXIA BERRY
The Fish Knows
computer imaging

FUKIKO CUDHEA
untitled
acrylic on canvas

JEFF MALE

Burnt Fudge

for Aleta Michele

It took them two years
to notice me
as something more
than someone's kid
sister. To me

they were magnetic
with their man-child
bodies: ungainly kinetic
angles, and their ways
of being just so cool
to my hands, my heart;
so cool.

When we were all grown up
they became a midnight
craving for that first
time pain: an unscratchable
itch, the hot sweetness
of love promises,
and my heart
whispering: *fear*.

Now, after winning,
losing, and finally
giving up keeping score,
I look back, and see love
as swollen ankles,
aching breasts, scraped

knees, car-pools to soccer
games, ballet slippers
and the taste of burnt fudge
late at night, in bare feet
on a cold kitchen floor.

The Dream Child

I cleaned out and closed
your apartment last Tuesday.
In a box with a Reebok label marked
Men's Cross Trainers, Size 11
I found some photos. I kept
the one of you in a devil costume
at someone's party, a grin
stretching from your red-cloth
covered feet to the top
of your plastic horns.

The snap-shots of your
First Holy Communion and
Confirmation I sent to Sis.
She and mom were always
into canons of suffering,
guilt, and hereafter redemption;
so much love, those two,
so little compassion.

I also kept the pictures
from that summer in Duxbury
at Grandma Cotton's, the ones
Dad took after I rescued you
from the lake, water bubbling
from your mouth fighting to get
air and life back, saying:
This must be your dream,
little brother; in mine I died."

The Stuff of Legends

My mother never spoke
of her grandfather,
but spoke of mine as if
he were her prodigal son.
As far back as she
could remember
he had been a pullman porter
on the Great Northwestern,
wandering the rails
of commerce, invisible
to those who were not
his kind, his blue eyes and high
yellowness all too visible
to those who were.

I carried his name ten
years before he arrived
to claim it. The 1956
World Series
was into its third game
when I arrived home
from school that day.
The Green Lantern,
Superman, not even
Jackie Robinson
could have filled up
our front hallway
like he did.

My mother, mop in hand,
was telling him that the floor
he had just walked across
was wet. His reply
as he turned around,
looked down, saw his
footprints glistening up
to where he stood
was that of a parent
being chastised like
a child: "Too late now,
I'm already half way
to where I was going."

YUK-TAI MAN

Kathleen Was A Dancer

Kathleen was a dancer. She offered me to dance. She offered to dance in my lap. I didn't have twenty dollars. So, she merely sat. In my lap, she merely smiled, her parted lips a tongue's tip away. I tried to speak.

"Your skin's so warm," she said.

I shivered. I tried again to speak. She laughed. "Sometimes, I forget how to talk. Most men don't come to talk. Some men I frighten with words. Some I intimidate with just three syllables."

I spoke. I asked her about herself. She had driven a forklift on an Aleutian Island. She had left because of too many men and too many eyes.

"But here the men have come to watch."

"Yes—but here, I'm in control."

I apologized for my bony thighs.

"Muscles," she said, her fingernails tracing the edges of my thigh.

On my last night on Oahu, I went back to the Crazy Horse. I brought twenty dollars. A featured dancer danced. After each song, she stripped off half of her costume. After three halves, she had finished. At the bar, she offered polaroid group portraits: you, her, and both of her breasts. I looked for Kathleen. Again, she found me.

"Do you remember me?"

Despite the dark, despite the costumes, the fantasy, I had expected to recognize a face. I had not seen that the first time, Kathleen had worn a wig. I had never seen her walk. I imagine now the sway of her back beneath the drape of that wig. I imagine the swell of each hip, the subsidence of each thigh. I imagine her walk revealed—exaggerated and as frank as she.

"Tip me," she said.

She held out her hand but only from the elbow. Her shoulders hunched. Her body shrank. With both my hands, I held out the twenty dollars between us. I angled the face of Andrew Jackson toward the scatter of a stray stage light.

"You have a nice cock."

I flinched.

"Did you enjoy it?"

Enough to wet my pants—I tried again to speak. She might have misunderstood.

"Interesting people can be sexy too," she said.

"You are sexy. You are interesting. You're interesting enough that I wish I had met you in another place, had come to you in another way."

"That's sweet."

"Would you mind if I made a blatant pass?"

"No."

"What are you doing for breakfast?"

"No. I have plans."

I had risked. I had lost. I risked more.

"If you had met me in another place, had known me in another way, would you have said yes?"

"Do you want to know the real reason?"

"No—yes."

"I'm a lesbian. I've fucked guys; I wasn't satisfied."

I hadn't asked. But I wouldn't have been satisfied either—not with fucking guys.

"Sex work's okay; I'm not that kind of feminist. But, management sucks."

"Do you really work only for tips?"

"They give me a stage, sound, a semi-legal place, and a coke every half-hour; I work only for tips."

I asked her about her girlfriend. I wondered if her girlfriend was ever jealous—not of the men but of the other women dancing. Sometimes, Kathleen stayed to watch.

"She doesn't mind, as long as I put on my heels and dance for her too."

I didn't ask for whom else she danced. The song had ended; another began. Another dancer mounted the stage.

"Do you want me to stay?"

"I do. But, I don't have another twenty dollars."

"Let me look. Let me see. If there are no others, I'll come back."

She came back.

"You're sweet," she said. She kissed me, and she hugged me; I shook her hand. She had thought she might be in New York in a year. I didn't offer my address. I had lost enough. I had enough to remember.

"I have to go,"she said. She stood, and she turned. She bent over and wiggled her ass. I should have laughed. I should have kissed her and surprised her too. With my fingertips, I traced her thigh.

Outside the Crazy Horse, a woman waited, one hand in her back-pocket, a crease at her hip. She smiled—Kathleen appeared. Kathleen had put on shorts and hip-high, high-heeled boots. I said goodnight to her, as I passed.

"Who was that?"

"Just a customer."

I looked back. They had stopped on the bridge and stood, looking out, over the canal. The night was warm. City-lights shone on the water. I walked faster.

"You're sweet," she said. In my lap, I could've believed. Looking back, I still want to believe.

MASANORI FUKUDA
Boston Night #1

MASANORI FUKUDA
Boston Night #2

PATRICIA HUDSON
Dog in Cafe

JOANNE DESMOND
Barbie
photo collage

SUSAN ELIZABETH MURLEY

Clear And Bright

In this place where Christine lived—a cross between a cottage and a pig shed—she would herd her frogs from the bathroom floor before each bath, into a plastic rubbish bin, and put them outside. There were no screens on either the windows or the doors, and it was so hot that she left them open all the time. Through the door came first the landlord's chickens, who clucked companionably, made a few turns around the living room and left, and then the neighbors' cats who played with the drips from the leaky kitchen faucet. She really had to be a better housekeeper—she felt guilty when the frogs got out of the bathroom and into dusty corners of the living room, ending up with wads of dust clinging to their feet. As Christine scanned the room, another one of Violet's progeny—Violet was a small purple lizard—skittered across the ceiling. Thank goodness, her children were becoming more adept at climbing and were less likely to drop from the ceiling into the bed. Violet, a whiz at catching mosquitos, lived behind one of the picture frames along with Lilac, Lavender, Heliotrope, and Mauve.

The corrugated tin roof on the house was a problem. When it rained, the clatter on the roof was deafening. But it was worse when the sun beat down on it and the air inside swelled with a sickening heat. None of her friends ever came to visit anymore. None of her clothes ever got to be old; they just disintegrated from the sweat. She coped the best she could. At night, she doused herself with mosquito repellent, dragged an old wicker chair into the garden, read musty old novels about other hot places and drank San Miguel beer until she became drowsy enough to either go to sleep or take her third bath of the day. She threw icy cold dipperfuls of water from a bucket on herself until she was shivering, and then stood naked in front of a fan.

Her husband kept warning her that she would probably have a heart attack and die. Usually she just ignored his pleas to come to bed, and went back into the garden. Having a garden in space-starved Hong Kong was a miracle; even the governor did not have one. Even she with her black thumb could not restrain its insane fertility. One day the bamboo grew fourteen inches. At night, however, the garden became a place of mystery and magic. Christine went out and marveled again at the giant banana leaf unfurling itself like an

elephant's ear. She plucked some white Arabian jasmine in the moonlight; it probably had bugs on it, but she decided to bring it into her bed and put it under her pillow anyway. She really was doing her best to adapt, to adjust. She had always prided herself on not being a typical American, one of those attached by an umbilical cord to Shakey's Pizza and the frozen magaritas at the Sheraton Hotel in Kowloon. But sometimes it all seemed too much.

She went inside to the altar to her husband's mother. In the corner of the living room, a black and white portrait of her hung on the wall, over a wooden chest carved with dragons. A bouquet of flowers and two tea cups of Chinese wine sat on the chest. Mother was dressed in a high-necked Chinese tunic. Her ear lobes sagged slightly under the weight of heavy jade earrings, and she had a bony face with very arched eyebrows. There was no expression on her face in the portrait, but most certainly she was displeased that her only son had sullied his pure Chinese blood by marrying a foreign devil, a *gwai-lo*, a ghost person. Christine squared her shoulders, then bowed slightly to the portrait and said, "I'm doing the best I can, really I am." She bowed again and backed away from the portrait—it was unseemly to present one's rear to one's mother-in-law.

She climbed into bed and lay next to her sleeping husband. He lay on his back with his hands folded on his chest. He looked most alien to her when he was asleep. Right now he looked like the emperor, dressed in a jade burial suit, that she had seen in a museum. As usual he slept with his eyes partly open. This was eerie at first, but she thought that he had particularly slanted eyes and that he simply did not have enough eyelid folds to cover his eyes completely.

Although his Chinese name, Wai Ming, was perfectly servicable, euphonious, and had a good meaning, Great Brightness, he and all of his friends had taken stiff-upper-lip British names. She could not understand why—he and all of his friends professed to despise those snotty Brits. He introduced himself as Vincent, and his friends were Andrew, Anthony, Francis, and Edward. They allowed no nicknames: no Eds, Franks, Andys, or Tonys. She amused herself by inventing names for them like those of ancient English and European kings. She thought of them as Andrew the Idiot, Anthony the Unfavorable, Francis the Philanderer, and Edward the Pompous.

Vincent had actually invited Andrew the Idiot and Francis the Philanderer and his girlfriend to join them on their honeymoon in Macau. No one had bothered to make reservations, and so all five of them had to sleep in a claustrophobic brown room in a run-down *pension*. They returned late one night from playing blackjack and *dai-siu* at the floating casino on the inner harbor and all the lights were out. They accepted the owner's explanation that the electricity had

gone off and would be back on in the morning. After they checked out the next day, they sat eating egg custard tarts and drinking strong *Po Lei* tea at a street stall. The waiter told them that there was no electricity at the *pension* because it had been condemned and the owner was running it illegally. No one complained.

Before the wedding, Hong Kong had had a drought. There was water only five hours a day, and she'd had to bathe herself under a cold water tap with a hose behind her husband's brother-in-law's used battery shop. When Christine recounted this story of her wedding and of her honeymoon to her family back in the States, she tried to be courageous and present them as merely more amusing incidents in her fascinating life in the Orient. But really she felt cheated, and sometimes wondered if she was actually married. Next to her husband in this too-small Chinese bed, she sighed, turned, and folded herself into sleep.

She opened her eyes and saw water running down the walls again. It was early April and the entire south China coast had been swathed in dense fog for twenty-nine days. She wondered if there were still any stars in the sky at night and whether there were still sunrises and sunsets. One of the Hong Kong and Yaumati Ferry Company's ships had rammed another in the fog and gone aground again. Christine went to the kitchen window and looked out; she could not even see the landlord's house, which was only a hundred feet away. The only sign that the little house was still attached to the earth was the faint outline of the skinny evergreen *pak* trees that separated the houses. Why the Chinese called this season of the year *Ching Ming*, "clear and bright," was a mystery to her.

Since the summer, she had lost her job, and Vincent had become an inspector in the Royal Hong Kong Police. Because he worked undercover, he cultivated a bewildering array of moustaches and beards. He wore baggy Hawaiian shirts to hide his gun. He and his colleagues engaged in revolting conversations with stunning coolness. They once talked about headless corpses floating in the harbor, "and so why didn't that dumb bellboy realize that the suitcase he was carrying was certainly too heavy to be someone's clothes?"

Vincent was away much of the time and was worried that Christine spent so much time wandering over the hills and communing with the feral cattle in the deserted villages of the New Territories. So without telling her beforehand, he tried to hook her up with the Christian ladies. They would never tell her just what they were—Catholic, Unitarian, Pentecostal, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Seventh Day Adventist, Mormon, Jehovah's Witnesses—they kept insisting they were Christian. They occupied most of the three-story concrete block houses near the university in a

grubby Chinese village with open drains. Their husbands were off smuggling Bibles over the border into China; they raised children, gave luncheon parties, and studied the Bible. Vincent insisted that she accept an invitation to lunch. What to wear to a luncheon in a place like this? She decided that blue jeans and track shoes were just fine for luncheon and was dismayed to find all of the ladies fully made up and in pumps and pearls.

Luncheon was orange soda, potato chips, frozen chicken from the U.S.A., and a strangled, brownish green mess that she supposed was a vegetable. "Delicious!" they said. "I must have this recipe!" It was canned green beans and Campbell's Cream of Mushroom soup, with mayonnaise and a can of Durkee's Fried Onions sprinkled over the top. The conversation was children and cooking. She had no children and ate only Chinese food. With the starched table cloth and sterling silver before her, she felt like a character out of *The Jungle Book.* During the Bible reading at the end of the meal, while the ladies confidently flipped to the precise page in the Bible, she did not even know if First Corinthians was at the beginning or the end. "Never again," she thought as she hopped over the stinking, swirling grey water of the drains, as she fled to the railway station. Breakfast over a dismembered body in a suitcase, with Vincent and his homicide-obsessed buddies was preferable to this.

It was the time of the Ching Ming festival, the time of year when all Chinese went to the cemeteries and worshipped their ancestors. Chinese tradition decreed that the dead be buried in wooden coffins. After seven years, the coffins were dug up, and the bones cleaned and polished. Then the relatives had to put these bones in a large pottery jar and find an auspicious place for them, preferably on a mountain overlooking the sea. However, in densely-populated Hong Kong, there were few such places. A person was allotted a plot in a government cemetery for seven years; then it had to be vacated for the next person. What happened to the remains of the dearly departed after their seven years in the Wo Hop Shek government cemetery was the families' problem.

Her little house could only be reached by navigating a foot path that snaked through fields of watercress. It was quiet all year, except during the Ching Ming festival. The house was situated under a vast mountain that was covered from top to bottom with graves. These graves were completely cemented over and were unimaginably ugly. Only a few pathetic sprigs of grass stuck up between them. They were so packed together that, in order to reach their own relatives, everyone had to walk on the graves of others.

During this time of year, Christine could hardly get out of the gate from her house. Hordes of people stormed the footpath,

staggering with armloads of flowers, candles, incense, wine, oranges; some people were even carrying whole roasted pigs. Exasperated, she would demand of Vincent, "Why in heaven's name does everyone have to come now? Why can't they just come some other time, why don't they take turns? Why?"

"Well, the gates of heaven are only open once a year, and if you make sacrifices at other times the gods don't accept them."

Vincent's parents were both dead. Mother, of course, was always somewhat present, but Christine realized that she did not know where Vincent's parents were actually buried. Vincent, however, showed no signs of wanting to join the crowds surging up the mountain. Instead, he went off in the opposite direction, to the wet market at Luen Wo Hui to buy scallions, octopus balls, bean curd, and noodles for lunch. He was a fanatic about fresh food, and shopped for every meal. After Christine tripped over a bloody cow's head once, she avoided the wet market as much as possible. She wondered what he would have made of the Christian ladies' lunch.

He came back an hour later with many little bundles wrapped in newspaper and tied with pieces of reed, which he put in the kitchen sink. He deposited a large black plastic garbage bag in front of the television, then tossed a newspaper on the table and flopped down into the old wicker chair.

"What did you buy? What's in the bag?"

"Eeerh . . . it's my mother."

"Yeah, right, Vincent, sure . . . . Tell me another one."

"No, I'm not kidding you. It really is my mother."

"Your Mother?? What's the matter with you? Are you sick? Are you crazy or something? Carrying your mother around in a plastic bag. What are you going to do with her? Are you going to keep her here? Are you going to put her in the dragon chest? No, no, I can't stand it. This is going too far."

"Will you shut up and listen for one moment! Don't be ridiculous. Just exactly what do you think of me? No, of course she's not going to stay here. But I can't leave her out on the foot path right now. She has to stay here for a little while. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. You know my father passed away a long time ago. He's in a small Christian cemetery downtown. But it has been closed for some time now, and it's not possible to bury anyone else there. I got an exhumation order from the government about my mother several weeks ago. I didn't know how to explain this to you. Anyway, they have been apart for so many years now, it's time for them to be together again. I've already hired a gravedigger and a taxi. When it gets dark, I'm going with my brother-in-law and the gravedigger to the cemetery. We'll dig up my father and put my mother under him.

Of course, her name can never be on the gravestone, but that's not too important. You know, she still has all her gold teeth and she's wearing her jade rings and her jade bracelet. I decided to take the bracelet and give it to my sister."

"Oh yuck, gross—you mean you looked at her? God!"

"Of course I did. It's not disgusting. There are only bones left. She's my mom and she will bless me for taking such good care of her."

They had lunch and read the newspaper, and Mother stayed in the black garbage bag in front of the television. Christine decided that she really could not sit with Vincent and Mother for the whole afternoon. She needed a good walk in the hills. She would wander in the mist like the ghost person that she was. Perhaps she would find the dainty deer-like cattle that also roamed up there. She would stop and talk to them and they would show their attentiveness by slightly flicking their ears. She got to the bus stop just as the bus pulled in; appropriately, there was not a single other passenger. The bus driver paid no attention to her as she got on, and the bus wheezed off into the nothingness . . . . Christine stayed out until long after dark. When she got back to the little house, it was again wrapped in thick fog, and no lights were on. But bizarrely, a robust wind came up and the *pak* trees bent almost double over the tin roof. The wind tore open a piece of the sky and she could see one star shining overhead. Christine stood, and waited, and wondered if she should go inside.

THOMAS O'MALLEY

Dive

He decided to pull the gun from his mouth, still thinking about all the things he had never managed to pull off successfully, when the gun went off and surprised the shit out of him—still attempting to catch up with the last thoughts that raced at billions of milliseconds through his dissipating ganglia as his brains rush towards the wall; suddenly he feels he is

falling

fourteen and falling forever
from the barn loft: the bent weather-worn trusses and the galvanized roofing and the ladder streaming past, a rush of breath in his stomach and then sinking and rising on a vast bed of hay. Christine is standing at the edge looking down, twenty feet away, yet he can clearly see the silhouette of her body as the golden light behind her spills through her dress, and although it is warm—heat rises from the fresh hay and holds him with moist hands—there are goosebumps upon her arms and legs; her dress falls out from her body and he sees that the goosebumps extend above her knees and climb the pale skin of her thighs, reaching towards a small glimmer of white between her legs. He feels the sun beat down on the galvanised tin roof and stroke his body and it is as if he is sleeping and then as if he is dreaming. But he is awake, and from way up there Christine smiles, grits her teeth daringly, steps back, muscles tightening in her thighs and then she rushes forward, her silhouette moving beneath her dress. Up and out, arms thrown back, mouth wide, tears streaming from her eyes, she is falling through the dazzling dust motes, hair whipped around her face, dress whipped around her hips and climbing up her back, like wings. Caught in a pillar of light descending from the tattered ceiling, a gyre of kinesis encircling her falling form, legs flung wide—and momentarily, the illusion of complete nakedness—as she falls over him, towards him, stretching and spreading her long legs to sink deep into the uprushing hay. It seems to take forever.

When she lands he falls into the wake her landing has created, and rising, falling on the waves of her impact they roll and fall and

slide across each other, laughing. Waiting for the waves to subside and settle beneath their breathing, flushed forms, their skin becomes warm and moist like the hay. Her dress rises and falls across her thighs and the small of her back like a wave whipped by the winds of her movement. When they are still, the dress settles across the flat of her stomach. Their laughter dies slowly, their breathing calms, they cough in the flax and smile at each other. Her pale thighs reflect the golden hue of the hay and the high colour in her cheeks. With the tears of laughter still sparkling in her eyes, she adjusts her dress. He stares at her face, warm with life, and grins.

They jump up and race, laughing, to the ladder. He lets her beat him so he can watch her ascend. She rises through the twisting, writhing light. His eyes rise beneath her dress, and beneath her dress her skin shines in colours: blushed, crosshatched in livid crimson from the haystalks she has lain upon. A single small stalk still clings there to the warm moist skin and sways as she sways. He follows that rising, turning motion towards a beautiful secret sliver of spiralling, glistening light dripping down the pale seam between her legs and falling in dust motes caught in a gyre of sunlight and crashing as waves upon the roof of a sea of hay, her dress whipped about her waist as she climbs, twisting and rolling and reaching the last rung of the ladder. Up and over, and then she is turning back to watch him, her dress falling out from her body, and the flaxen light reaching up, high above her knees, climbing her shining thighs, and cradling the soft flesh, fingering the web of white cloth there, parting and spreading and the sun beating heavy upon the tin roof in waves, in waves, growing brighter and brighter and he squints through the heat coming and coming and her silhouette shines naked and wet through her dress and dissolves in a gyre of white light and he is

falling

fourteen and falling forever
towards his brains dashed to the wall
and spread splattered upon the floor,
as the gunshot resounds
and the gun falls with a loud clatter.

NORM OPPEGARD

Mrs. Chang Rides the Bus

It is one hundred degrees outside, hotter
in the back of the crowded bus.
Mrs. Chang imagines biting a plum dark
as cooled lava, the mash
of pulp against her palate, the squish
of sweet juice bathing her tongue.
Yes, she will have to stop at Gino's
to buy plums and some red pepper
and cool greens too. Gino will say
she is getting a steal at twice the price
and she will laugh and cluck
at the old joke between them.
Mrs. Chang likes Italians, admires
their ingenuity; what they did
with a simple noodle from China,
elegance and harmony in a twist of dough.

I Want to Leap into the Star-Fired Sky and Shout your Name

but you are asleep on my shoulder,
one week old, and I will content myself
with fatherly thoughts: how you will be
the first major-leaguer to pitch forty wins,
bat four-hundred, whack seventy
out of the park, and recite your
Nobel Prize poems by accolade
after each game of that season. How

you will get to be a child—crouched
for hours by the spring melt, scrutinizing
each rivulet as it searches out its path
through new grass and fetid leaf; each channel
an ocean, each leaf a world no a star no a galaxy
of your universe alive with wondrous creatures
guided by a flicker of your intent brow. How

when crows speak you will understand, when
you speak, they will listen. How the roar of wild
water will bring you peace. How the only promise
I can make is my unconditional love. O, I want to leap
into the star-fired sky and shout your name,
but you are asleep on my shoulder, son,
one week old now and I will content myself
to be glazed in the milk-fire of your sweet breath.

Boat From Bamboo

(for Vân Lẹ)

When you grasped my shoulder,
I dove deep into old terror:
Asleep, wakened by hands
hard on the back of my neck, knife
blade glints at me, slices
forever across my throat, splits
cartilage, sucking air
in like a toke.
You seek me now
with human eyes; write out
Boat From Bamboo, repeat bạn bè,
friend, bạn bè, friend, pointing
to the page, certain that words heal.

BOOMER PINCHES

Alberto Balsam

Leckie and I brought our chairs down to the beach after lunch. There were no clouds in the sky, and the ocean sparkled in the sun. Every now and then a sea gull would swoop down and dip into the water. There were a lot of people on the beach, but it wasn't that crowded. The primary colors of beach umbrellas dotted the shoreline in both directions. We sat down behind everyone else. I watched the waves roll in.

Leckie pulled something out of the pouch in the back of her chair and tossed it in my lap. It was a flimsy white hat. It looked like the kind of hat someone might wear to go fishing.

"What's this?"

"What does it look like, Neil?"

I picked it up. "Am I supposed to wear this?"

"It'll keep your bald little head from getting sunburned," she said. She was wearing sunglasses. I couldn't see her eyes. "It's the one I got at Hands. Four bucks."

"Leckie, I can't take your hat."

"Don't worry about it. I'll get another one. I think I can spare four bucks."

"Aww, Leckie, you're a queen," I said, smiling.

"I know, I know."

I put the hat on my head. She watched me and laughed.

"What?"

"You look like an old man," she said.

"You bought the motherfucker."

"No, it's very you."

"I'll bet it is." I sat back with my arms folded. "Just call me D.J. Cool." It was a good thing she got me the hat. My scalp would've fried, and I hadn't even thought of it.

We sat and looked out at the ocean for a while. A little boy with curly blond hair that fell past his ears sat alone a few yards away from us. He was scooping sand into a purple octopus mold. He filled it up and dumped it out. The sand got all over his white shorts. He saw me and Leckie looking at him. He smiled shyly at Leckie. She smiled back. I smiled and waved, but he didn't look at me. He walked over to Leckie and held the octopus out to her.

"What?" she said, still smiling. She took the octopus and his smile

got wider and he turned and ran away.

"Good job, Leckie. You scared him."

"I think you scared him. He liked me." She dipped the purple octopus into the sand and poured it out over her feet. The sand hissed as it fell.

"Hey, Neil."

"Hey what."

"Can I bury you in the sand later?"

"Do I get to bury you in the sand?"

"You know what I think?" She had buried her feet and was wiggling her toes free.

"What's that, Leck?"

"I think we should both get buried in the sand."

"That's brilliant, Leckie, you're a fucking genius."

"Y' know?"

The blond boy came back holding a clam shell. Leckie let her jaw drop open.

"What's this?" she said.

The boy handed it to her. His smile wouldn't go away. He had beautiful green eyes.

"Thanks," Leckie said. She handed him the purple octopus, and he went off again.

"Look at that. You broke his heart, Leckie."

"I was perfectly nice."

"You used him for his toys."

"You're just jealous you didn't get a shell."

"Did you see him run? He was gone!"

Leckie sighed loudly. "That's right, blame it all on me."

"Leckie—"

"I'm the bitch here."

"I think you traumatized the poor kid."

Leckie gave a little snicker. "You know, Neil, I invite you down here, I try to be nice to you—"

"Aww, Leckie . . ."

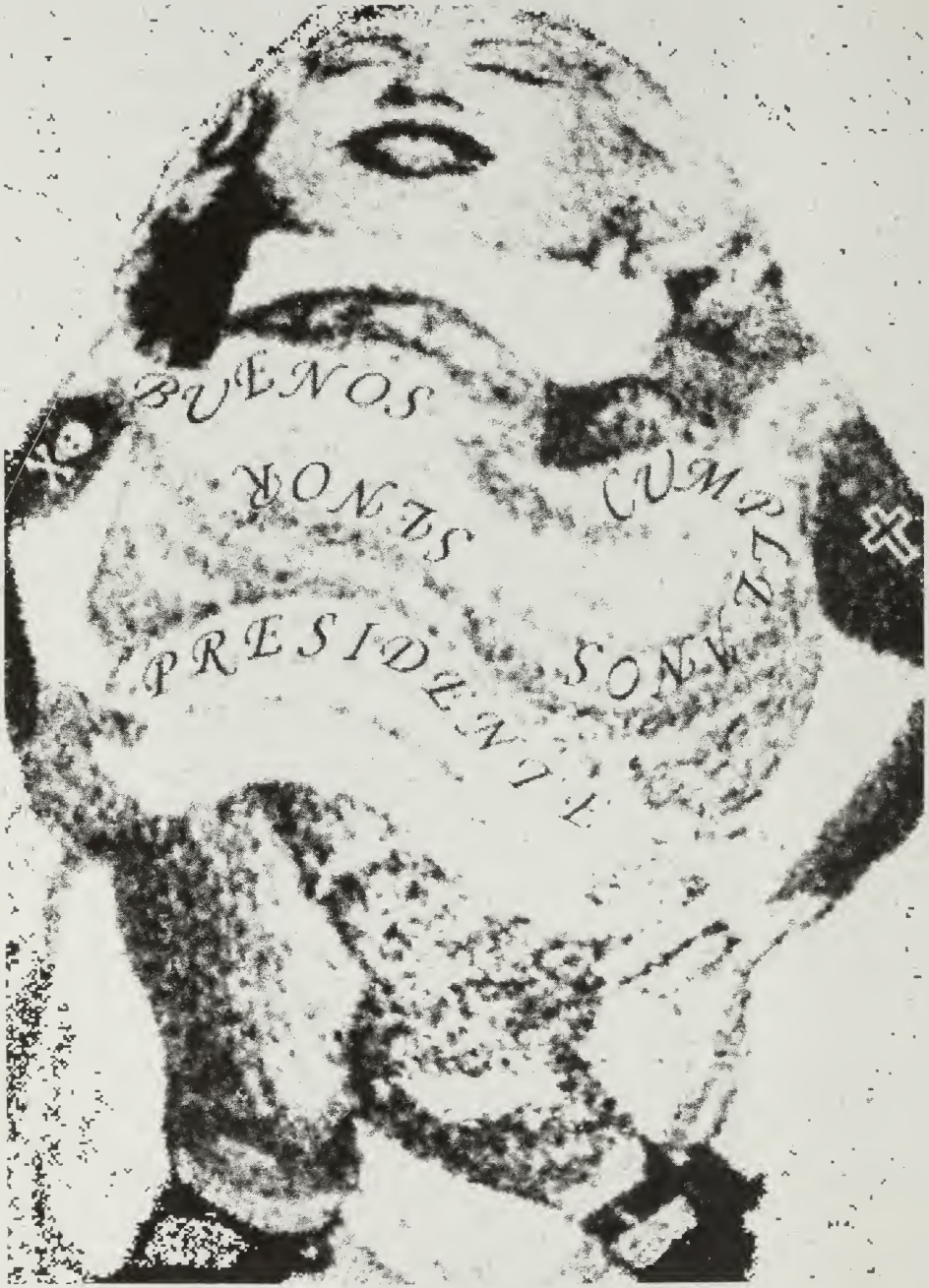
"And all you do is give me shit!"

"Leckie . . . ," I turned my palms up. "You know I love you, Leckie." It kind of slipped out. She was looking away from me when I said it, but I think she was smiling.

A little girl was being led off the beach by her mother. As they passed in front of us the little girl looked over her shoulder and waved at the ocean.

"Bye-bye, ocean," she said. "Bye-bye, waves. Bye-bye, beach. Bye-bye, sun." She turned and walked straight, her finger pressed to her lips. Then she looked over her shoulder and waved one last time. "Bye-bye, fish. Bye-bye, buds." I think she meant birds.

DARLENE FAHEY
Man with Hairy Chest Playing Violin
soft-ground etching & drypoint



JASON GREEN
Happy Birthday, Mr. President
computer imaging

RENATA ROSKOPF

Beneath Wooden Skies

our stiff legs flounder
in air and children dangle
from dazzlingly decorated backs while

bystanders snatch photos that capture
smiles while riders go round
in circles. Some were once

ninjas, Gueniveres, kings' knights , but have grown
grey hair since then, demanding more
happiness than is found above hovering hooves.

They now bring offspring that kick
our sides and yank our solid manes.
This rusty pole bored through restrains

winces, while clamor called *music* renders
my wished whinny silent.
With hollow strength, I can't throw

warning to the wobbly ones. I'm susceptible to
scratches and nicks that can't
heal. Since long ago,

I hoped my wooden heels would glide through blades
of grass, drifts of snow, under sky. At least
I have been one to sway

up to the light-bulbs, and barely
back to the ground. Without a second's blink
of one eye, I have stayed the same.

Closing the Cigar Store at Night

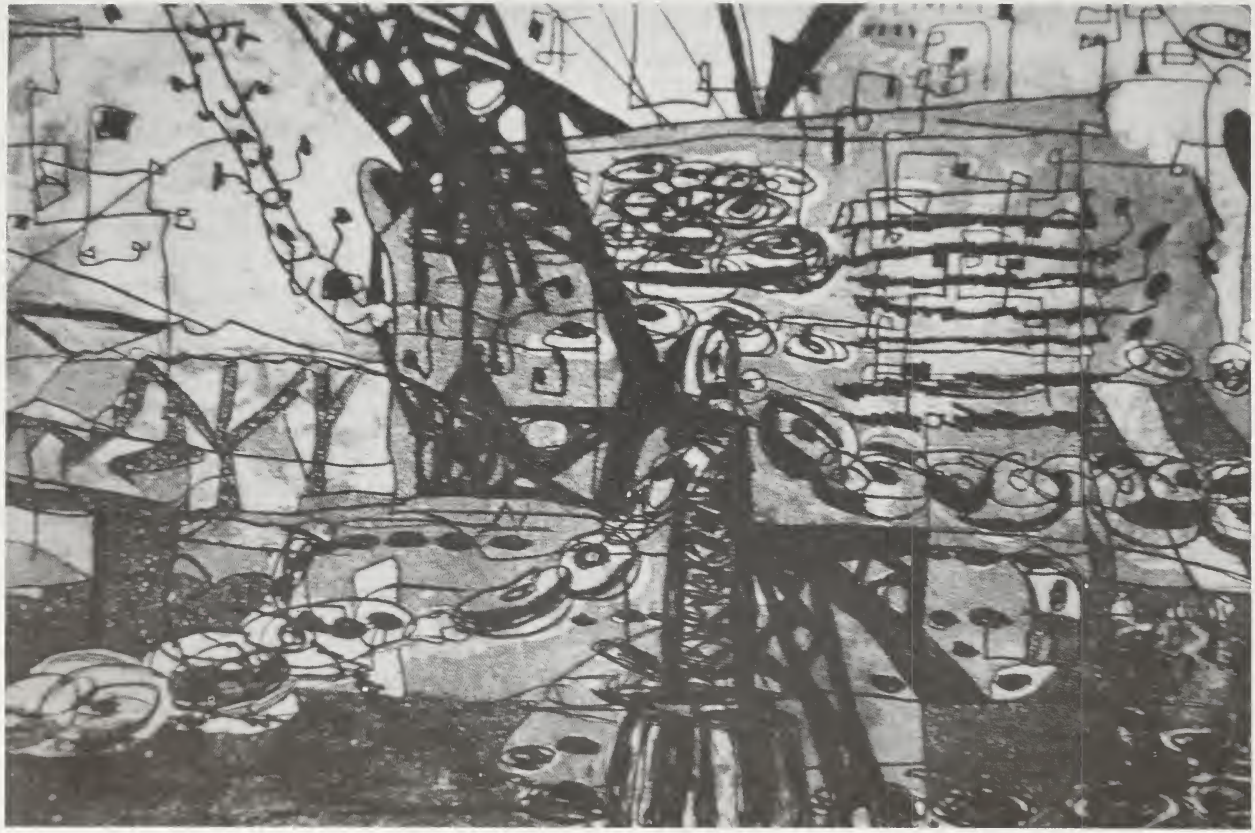
Thoughts collect
as I vacuum up.
The Eureka roars over
grey industrial carpet.

I want it clean. I
want to go home. Then
I stop, noticing
a toddler wrap

around the aisle, as sugar curls
twist in front of her face.
Her father sniffs
Macanudos and Partagas.

I remember getting lost
somewhere in the green
shag rug we had
when I was three.

A vicious monster
would graze on it
for hours, dragging
my mother around.



KARA TUTUNJIAN
Mechanical Music by the Channel
etching

JENNIFER MANZELLA
untitled
monotype

TANYA STUBBS

Stitching Fiction

Fictions are fabrications:
one word squares with the next
to fashion a patchwork quilt.

Snippets of calico conversation
and wooly homespun yarns interweave
with remnants of faded memories,

just a jumble of motley rags
until creative inclination
mends experience and imagination.

The pen becomes a needle
pulling a common thread,
stitching a plot from random scraps.

MARIE KETSIA THEODORE

Marie Belle Gazelle: The Mango Tree

She lived behind the plantain field which my grandpa owned. Her little house was surrounded by trees. Sometimes I used to think that people forgot she was alive because it is impossible to see her house. But I could see it. I watched her every day from the top of my house. She left every morning on her mule and came back every night. Sometimes I wondered what she lived on. She didn't have a farm like my grandpa. She didn't even have a garden. All she had was a *tonnel*. A *tonnel* made of hay and a thin sheet of cheap metal. Four pillars of long sticks called *gols*, and hay is stacked between the *gols*, and the sheet of metal on top as a roof. I used to say a prayer for her every day, because then in my young mind, I knew nothing was holding up that sheet of metal above her head. I would pray that there wouldn't be storms, but the storms came, just like they always came, the ones who dressed in khaki or blue: one color for the number of people they have killed.

At first I thought she was old. But then one day, while I was watching her from behind a plantain tree, she turned and looked my way. Every day we played this little cat-and-mouse game. One day I went to her *tonnel*. I saw her face, like a new-born kitten. She had left the door open. I went in. There was a mango tree planted right in the middle of the tonnel. A short tree with ripened fruits, and her donkey was nowhere to be seen. We didn't speak. She offered me a mango, and I refused politely. My mother had said that poor women steal your soul with food.

The next day I went, and again she let me in. We sat and after a long while I worked up the courage to ask her name. She said, "Souffrance." I told her my name was Sabine. She said, "No, it is not. You are D'or; your maid is Sabine." I wondered how she knew. Everyday I went to her place. One day she started talking to me in jargon, putting *Kreyol* words backward—a game all schoolage children in town played, and played so well that it become a secret weapon of rebelling, a weapon most used by young forbidden lovers. "I know that you know who they are," she said, "for you see them from the top of your house." It was true: I had always seen them. Sometimes there were

three of them behind the trees that led into my grandpa's farm. I once saw a face in the hay of Souffrance's tonnel. "They are there all the time. If I cry, they'll know, and I can't cry because they will come for me."

That afternoon I asked my Aunt Corine about the old lady. My aunt didn't chastise me as I expected. Instead, she pulled me, made me sit between her legs, and started braiding my hair. She told me the story, as if she had been there from the beginning.

"Long time ago, about fifty years, the lady who lives in that little house was the belle of the town. Her name was Marie Belle Gazelle. She came with the name. She was beautiful. No one knows where she came from except that she bought a piece of land from an old man and built a tonnel with her two hands. Then the Boss, the head of the men who wore khaki, fancied her and he tried everything to get her, but she didn't want to have anything to do with him. Some say that she loved this guy who lived three gates down from the churchyard. All I know is that two years after she had moved to this town, she had twins. Two boys; nobody knew who their father was. Some say she was a prostitute and that was how she put her kids through school. Many men knew her. The men said that she was the best because it was with her voice that she loved them. Her voice was all the fulfillment a man needed. But she would not sing for the man, the Boss who wore khaki. Her two kids went to school. One became a lawyer; the other a khaki. The khaki killed his brother. Later on, the khaki too was killed. Some say by the Boss, his sire. The Boss ordered his men to watch her day and night. They watched because he said so. She wasn't to sing or cry, the Boss had ordered."

I stopped going to see her, because word had spread that Marie Belle Gazelle had befriended me. My family was so ashamed that they sent me away to France for a year. When I returned the following summer, I was allowed to spend two weeks in *Croix des Bouquets*. I raced to my spot on grandfather's roof. The *tonnel* wasn't there, and neither was the lady. But the mango tree stood where the *tonnel* had protected it so that it could grow its strange fruit. The mango tree was sound, staring at me. On it was draped a khaki uniform, blowing in the tired wind.

GRIFFIN URBANIAK

in the garden

she carries me on her old shoulders. I can feel
the fabric of her blouse against my legs
and my hands wrapped around the soft
wrinkles of her neck. the screen door slams
behind us and the crabapple world opens
up. white petals are blowing down,
carpeting the lawn with a fragrant white.
she reaches up to shake the branch and
sings *it's christmas in july, it's christmas*
in july. the blossoms sprinkle and suddenly
I feel cold. across the yard, the lilacs
are blooming, the tulips are blushing
the color of lollipops. I feel cold. the breeze
is soft, hissing through the ferns, spinning
the pinwheels on the patio—pappity-pap.
but it's snowing and it's not really july.
it's may and grandpa is soaking up whiskey
in his saggy chair, and the world outside
the picket fence smells like a festering
rot. mother holds the pain-keys and father
holds the bruises in his hands. but grandma
is holding me, shaking sweetness down
on both of us while the pinwheels go
pappity-pap. it is spring and I am four
and a half. it is too green and I
am too young to feel this cold.

the abduction

they got into a fight
and he picked me up
and put me into the car,
the green chevrolet malibu
where, if you lifted up
the floor mat, you could see
the grey road rushing by
through the rust-holes
in the bottom.

he took me to a park I didn't know.
beneath the trees, I picked up
pinecones, to give to mommy
when I got home.

Fireflies

They play in the streets
under the nuclear plume
a glowing sunset at mid-day
dusting May-day children
with invisible radiation.

Two days later, they are packed
onto buses with few provisions
for the field trip from which
they will never return.

Their dogs howl, scratching
the closed bus door,
fur filled with uranium fleas.
They turn feral in the fallout
scavenging for food
hunted down and shot
by soldiers.

The children ride off to Kiev
on wheels that contaminate
the road beneath them.
In Chernobyl, their set tables wait for dinner,
their toys will never be rescued.
In each new town,
children taunt them.
Ask if they glow.

KATE YOUNG CALEY

Fourteenth Anniversary

In the beginning was the word.
Perhaps you already know the rest.
Or perhaps we never do. I brush
dead leaves from our garden where light
patterns the ground like fancy cloth
we've cut and pieced and quilted together.

When I am trying to put the mysteries together
in a way I can understand, I think about the word
made flesh. Wrapped in swaddling cloth.
Come to me, I'll give you rest.
That part about the light.
I ponder, pull dead weeds, cut back old brush.

My thoughts compost like piles of brush
with coffee grounds and vegetable peels. Together,
transformed by water and light:
the richest soil you can imagine. You have my word,
that's what I give you. The rest
of it, though takes time. I wipe my hands on a dirty cloth

and think about you and me. Cut from the same cloth,
it seems some days. Like when you brush
your hands across my face and close your eyes and rest
with me, and we're together,
or just the way you speak a certain word,
it's so familiar, darkness is pushed back by light.

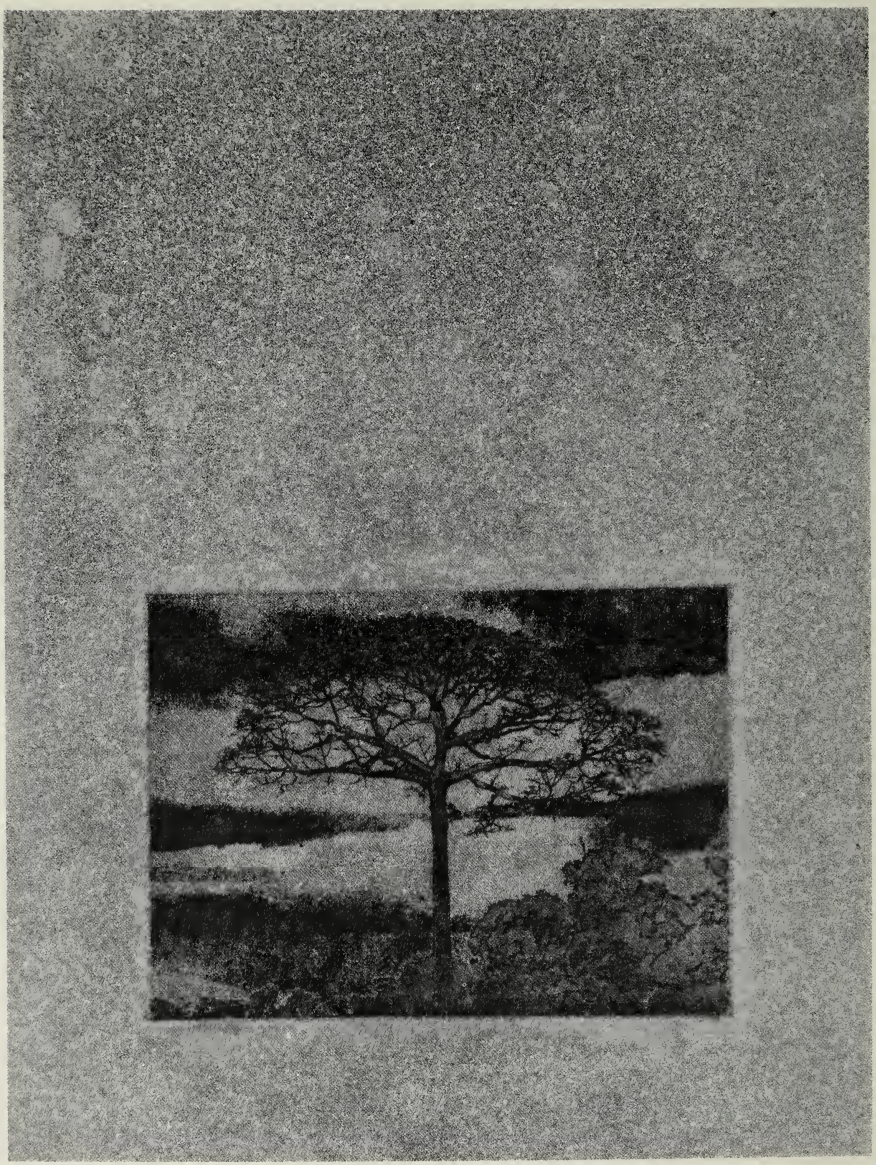
At those times, I know the light.
I bless the cloth,
the cloth maker and the well-chosen word.
I abide the mysteries and brush
away dead answers like dead leaves and put what I know together
with what I cannot know and set aside the rest.

I can find rest.
Or sometimes it finds me. Late evening, with one dim light
I turn thin pages while you sleep beside me. Together,
separated only by folds, I feel who we are like layers of cloth.
And yes, it has been torn before. We can't just brush
those things aside. We need to find the words

and I will search my whole life. I will wonder about the word. And all the rest
will float away from me and back again. Together,
we will know and not know. And we will live in darkness, and in light.

At Sandwich Fair

Familiar pleasures: colorful rows of mason jars,
The blue ribbon winner, an open Bible on a faded quilt.
My hands, sticky again with cotton candy. The invitation
of the midway. The rise of my stomach on the ferris wheel and the fall.
Hot cider, fried dough and the far off bellow of stanchioned cows.

Then I recognize a boy I used to know in the face of a man nearby.
I walk right over to him, "Listen," I almost say.
"I just finished this poem about your father.
I think I really captured something in it. And your mother, too.
Her unbrushed hair, that look she had, the time they sent her away."

I stop myself. I am absurd. What compels me to put words to such things?
We exchange politeness. I walk quickly away. Vow I will change.
And all the while I am noticing:
Woman without teeth sucking taffy apple. That hen, a Buff Cochin.
Poled Hereford. Jeff White, drunk at three o'clock and old.
The handsomest boy on the schoolbus. Taking note, seared by each detail.